

DEVELOPING A MULTI-SITE MINISTRY  
MODEL IN THE AFRICAN  
AMERICAN CHURCH

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **DEVELOPING A MULTI-SITE MINISTRY MODEL IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH**

by  
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#### **Mentors**

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The purpose of this project was to develop Multi-site church to assist in church growth at St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church located in the inner city of Miami, Florida. This project helped design a multi-site ministry that could be utilized to assist inner city churches with declined and declining African American congregations located in low growth areas. Churches considering expansion should look into establishing a multi-site location that places them in the demographic for growth. The methodology is quantitative and was used for all data. The project was successful. St. Paul's second site is growing and sustaining itself.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First, I am grateful and humbled that God allowed me to attend school and complete this written project. For that, I am truly thankful for the blessings given to me by God and the power of the Holy Ghost. Secondly, I thank my wife, Dr. Tracy, for all the love, kindness, support and insight that she has given to me throughout our many years of marriage together. Throughout these three years, she has finished her own doctorate, help raise two loving girls, and given me the love and care needed in order to simply, do well. You have been a rock and a constant to all things real and significant. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you are the spring of my aspirations to help build God's kingdom. I also thank our two daughters, Déja and Sydney for being wonderful young ladies and taking care of their mom while I was away. Your childlike honesty has helped me make it over these years and I pray that you always dream beyond your conditions.

Special thanks go out to my older sister, Renee (Nae) Darlene Baine, who is one of my greatest supporters. She has been there for me everyday of my life and supported me on every venture of my life and set great examples for me to follow. I know that I would not be where I am today if not for her. To her I say, thank you Nae, I'll love you forever!

No man is an island and we all need people to help us achieve our goals. Sometimes it takes being needy to realize you can not accomplish great things alone.

There are numerous people that have helped me to achieve this level of success. I want to thank United Theological Seminar for providing not only a sound academically based doctoral program but also a spiritually aware program that stretches and grows you at the same time. Because of United Theological Seminary, I am better equipped to change and help save a world from perishing. Many thanks go out to my mentors, Reverend Dr. Keith Donaldson D. Lawrence, and Reverend Dr. Kenneth E. Marcus, and our senior mentor, Bishop Donnell J. Moore.

To the members of St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church for their support and understanding, it's been a long three years but I want you to know that your support of and for me will always be remembered. I say thank you, and more especially to the leadership of SPC, I love you!

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this academic body of work to my late mother, Rozena Lee Baine who died when I was six years old, my late grandmother, Rosebud Lee Williams and my late stepmother Beatrice (Bee) Jackson. Thank you for your love and support. Though you have been watching over me from heaven, your sacrifice, love, support and the breadcrumbs you left behind have gotten me to where I am. I'm eternally grateful.



## INTRODUCTION

This project seeks to help St. Paul AME Church in Miami, as well as other churches around the nation discover opportunities and reasons to develop multi-site locations. The goal of the project is to develop a ministry model for growth that will assist my context and churches of similar context engage in significant church growth through expansion to multiple sites. In the book, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution: Being One Church In Many Locations*, Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird note, “The multi-site strategy allows that level of leadership gifting to elevate the effectiveness not only of one campus but of an endless number of potential kingdom localities. The possibilities are limitless, especially with contemporary technology.”<sup>1</sup> The idea is that through leadership, the church can expand and grow to do effective ministry not at one location, but possibly, at numerous location through the use of gifts and modern technology.

Through study and interviews it has been perceived that churches in urban communities are declining in membership due to migration of previous members from the inner city to what has been traditionally been called the suburbs. In churches across the country, as well as in the context of St. Paul, congregations are being faced more and more with the dilemma of breaking the traditional construct of worshipping in one location or expanding to where the growth is taking place and moving in order to survive

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<sup>1</sup> Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon and Warren Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution: Being One Church in Many Locations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 8.

in a culture of change. In his book, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code*, Samuel R. Chand states, "Every church and nonprofit encounters problems, but the good ones make a point of resolving difficulties so that they can rebuild trust and achieve their goals."<sup>2</sup> This project is a remedy to what congregations across the country are facing each and every day.

A second observation related to the decline of congregations across our country is the diversification that is taking place in urban communities. Many urban communities that were once African-American are facing demographic shifts as it relates to new residents. Everyday, there is an increase in the change of demographics in urban communities. As it relates to this project, St. Paul has experienced an increase in the number of Latino families that have and are moving into the area surrounding our main location. Because of the language barrier, it has become increasingly hard to draw individuals from the immediate community. To add to the problem, a once thriving community full of African-Americans has changed and the middle class African American congregant has relocated to an area where there is seemingly, very few, if at all any churches for people of color.

A final observation, as it relates to causes that drive the need for multi-site churches is the distance that current congregants have to drive when they relocate from the community immediately surrounding the church. In the project the average congregant moved over ten miles away from their previous home. This in turn increased the distance they would now travel to worship and study. This in many instances limits the number of times the congregant and family attends worship services at St. Paul during

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel R. Chand, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code: Seven Keys to Unleashing Vision and Inspiration* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 29.

the month. This project is designed to eliminate the travel distance and time as well as increase the number of times congregants attend worship. Surratt states, central to the development of their multi-site strategy is the call to be externally focused—to meet the needs of the city where God planted them a decade ago.<sup>3</sup> The need and mission should always be driven by the mission to reach out externally.

There is a growing amount of literature on the multi-site church; however, much of it is related to churches that are out of space in the current location. This project helps develop churches that want to grow in various locations, not dependent upon attendance at the current site. This can be done by developing detailed demographics and through a membership zip code analysis. Data is essential to the development of multi-site churches and can lend to even greater potential when utilized appropriately.

Chapter one presents the reader with the context of the ministry project and focus. It allows the reader to have a glimpse into the ministry context of St. Paul AME Church. It exposes the project to multiple organizational methodologies. It gives a six-fold strategy, a development plan and steps for implementation of the ministry project. Chapter one is a detailed outline of how St. Paul can effectively reach and design principles for a second location. It concludes with an evaluation plan and methods for project implementation.

In chapter two, the writer uses the biblical foundations to describe, undergird and create a theological foundation for the multi-site church. It uses the Bible to create firm footing for the development of the multi-site church. The biblical foundation chapter also helps the writer explain the foundation for biblical church growth. It utilizes scriptures

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<sup>3</sup> Surratt, Ligon and Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution*, 61.

from the Old Testament and New Testament to create a foundation rooted in the word of God.

Chapter three helps to develop the historical aspect of the project. It provides the historical backdrop for the beginning of the multi-site church movement. The history of the Methodist movement and the influence of John Wesley, gives a greater understanding of the church on the move. Wesley's idealism expands to the African Methodist Episcopal Church by its founder and first elected and consecrated Bishop who was named Richard Allen. Richard Allen's belief in connectionism helps us consider the importance of church planting and expansion.

In chapter four the theological foundation is presented and allows the writer to present sound doctrine that undergirds the project. The theological foundation deals with whether or not theology is important. Martin Luther questions whether or not theology is necessary at all. It helps us understand what the church really is and who makes up the church. The theological foundation addresses the role of scripture in worship, the levels of worship and the theology of church growth as it relates to the different types of multi-site opportunities.

Chapter five delves into the multi-site theory and how it is actually supposed to work, operate and function. It establishes all the necessary components needed for the multi-site church to be effective. It addresses items like staffing, locations and the necessary support needed to run a multi-site church. Problems that face the multi-site church are also addressed in this project and what needs to be resolved in order for the multi-site model to operate and succeed. The writer also suggest, that the need for multi-site churches are become more prevalent and needed in the context of church growth.

When the multi-site church is organized properly, the church can experience supernatural growth and prosperity.

Chapter six of this project provides the analysis of data and methodology and gives in detail the structure and concepts used in the project. Chapter six shows the data that was received and its use by the context associates to understand and disseminate to the group at large its results. The writer list the methodology used to gather the data and use of demographics in the project methodology at St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church. It also presents the calendar for the project and the implementation of the project description. The pre-survey, data, sermon outline and bible study notes were presented as well. Finally, the post-survey and summary of learning are presented with an outline of the project needs and an executive summary.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

Saint Paul AME church can be an enriching and exciting ministry with new programming that will provide more opportunity for learning and fellowship. This would help to get many more people involved and participating in the life of the church. We would reach out to neighborhoods beyond our current area, which would offer a chance for new membership and our numbers will grow. Our members would discover a deeper purpose in every area of their life: spiritually, emotionally, physically, financially, and in their family. At our church, love abounds, hope is restored, and lives are changed.

As communicated during the contextual analysis, the goal throughout the planning process was three fold: to incorporate the creation of a focused vision; to clearly communicate that vision; and to trust in the vision, as well as the people who would accomplish it. Our goal is that this plan would help mobilize us in the achievement of our stated goals and objectives.

The synergy of pastor and people serves as our roadmap by which we can visualize where we are going and how we will get there. It represents the most comprehensive compilation of the plan and it serves as a reference guide for the merging of the context and spiritual autobiography.

The objective of this project is to effect and impact information sharing. The formal communication strategy would allow the church to maintain the effectiveness of

its ministries and operations through transition and influence members to participate through forums and activities provided.

This strategy contains the following elements:

1. Communication Purpose and Objectives
2. Communication Principles
3. Key Deliverables of the Communication Strategy
4. Mechanisms
5. Audience Identification and Analysis
6. Evaluation Plan

### **Communication Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of the communication strategy is to contribute to the successful implementation of the DMin plan with the right communication delivered to the right audiences at the right time. The objective are:

- **Prepare Church Leadership:** Create awareness and understanding of projected impact of a successful implementation plan.
- **Enable Leadership Advocacy:** Provide information to enable leaders to be advocates of the implementation plan.
- **Build Synergy amongst the Congregation and the Church Leadership:** Provide communication that helps build the church's effectiveness.
- **Manage Expectations:** Reinforce the scope of the plan realistically to manage perceptions/expectations and to ensure key people understand that there will be short-term gains prior to the realization of long term gains.
- **Timely and Accurate Information:** Ensure decisions are based on timely and accurate information.

### **Communication Principles**

- Communication will be face to face where possible, particularly for critical messages and where the congregation is highly impacted or where leadership's involvement is critical.
- The church will use existing communication channels where possible, but will establish new, specific channels where necessary.
- Feedback mechanisms will be incorporated into all communication to enable the evaluation of the success of the communication plan and understand the targeted audience's response.
- Ensure communications contain consistent core messages.
- Design communication using fact-based information and deliver openly, regularly, and in a straight-forward manner.
- Evaluate at pre-determined points to ensure message is understood.

### **Key Deliverables of the Communication Strategy**

- Regularly scheduled meetings with the necessary groups
- Celebrations around key milestones
- Communications around key implementation activities
- Communications integrated into existing mediums (website, church bulletins, calendar, etc.)

### **Mechanisms**

Communication mechanisms will be selected from the following available sources according to the objectives and the audiences of each communication piece.

- Workshops
- Focus Group Sessions
- Email Memos



- Church Meetings
- Official Board Meetings

### **Audience Identification Analysis**

- Official Board
- Congregation
- Ministerial Staff
- Music Ministry
- Christian Education and Youth Ministry
- Media Ministry
- Class Leaders
- Lay Organization Presidents
- Membership Services
- Security and Valet Ministry

Once the audience has been identified, determine what your desired level and outcome for communication with each respective group—Awareness; Understanding; Acceptance; Commitment.

At this stage of communication, as you move toward full implementation, the suggestion is to aim your communication style more toward understanding, acceptance and commitment. The communication should bring about information sharing. The desired outcome is awareness.

<b>Level &amp; Outcome</b>	<b>Style</b>	<b>Communication Mechanism</b>	<b>Targeted Reaction When Received</b>
Building understanding <b><i>Understanding</i></b>	Dialogue; two-way; exploring and answering listener generated questions	Small group meetings Breakouts to develop questions Facilitated Q&A	"Having explored my concerns, now I understand the focus of the change and why it is needed"
Identifying implications <b>Acceptance</b>	Introspection; discussing with other what the messages mean to you and to the organization; multi-directional	Group interactive discussions ranging from multi-level; large or small group discussions to work team discussions; most important exploration done with other members and respective leaders	"This change means x for the church and z for the members and the body of Christ"
Gaining commitment <b>Commitment</b>	Sorting out inner feelings and choices; may require time and multiple returns to the discussion with members, ministers and or leadership	Alone time for introspection Opportunity to readdress issues with all those involved	"I personally want this change to succeed and am willing to contribute fully so that it does happen and is successful"

### **Evaluation Plan**

Perform a communications audit to assess the effectiveness of the communication plan with all involved. The following open questions should be administered by an independent party/consultant. The results will be considered and discussed with the appropriate church officials.

- What do you read/see/hear?
- What works/doesn't work?

- What do you want to see more of?
- What information do you need that you are not currently supplied with?
- How often do you want to receive information?
- How often do you want a venue to provide information and/or appropriate feedback?

Strategic implementation put simply is the process that puts plans and strategies into action to reach goals. The strategic plan is the document that lays out the plans of the church to reach goals, but will sit forgotten without strategic implementation. A strategic plan will be of little use to the church without a means of putting it into place. In fact, implementation is an essential part of the strategic planning process, which should include a process for applying the plan. The implementation makes the church's plans a reality.

Strategic implementation is critical to a church's success, addressing who, where, when, and how of reaching the desired goals and objectives. It focuses on the entire organization. Implementation occurs after environmental scans, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analyses, and identifying strategic issues and goals. Implementation involves assigning individuals to tasks and timelines that will help the church reach its goals.

A successful implementation plan requires the Pastor and his/her leadership to consistently communicate the vision with excitement, enthusiasm, and behaviors necessary for achievement. Performance measurements have been established to provide motivation and allow for timely follow up.

To successfully implement the strategy, several items must be in place. First, the right people, with the right unique skills and abilities and with an eagerness to assist must

be identified. These people will form the Strategic Implementation Team (SIT). The SIT will provide coordination of the plan (goals and objectives) to achieve the overarching goals of this three-year Strategic Plan. Meeting monthly, the team will monitor the process by reviewing results and communicating necessary adaptations. Each member of the Implementation Team will develop recommendations on appropriate and/or necessary courses of action. The structure of the SIT and the church's Leadership must be communicative and open, with scheduled meetings for updates.

A few words of caution, a very common mistake in strategic implementation is not developing ownership in the process. Also, a lack of communication and a plan that involves too much communication are common pitfalls. The implementation should not be too fluffy, with little concrete meaning and potential, or lack a way of tracking its progress. Another pitfall is not making action officers accountable for various aspects of the plan or powerful enough to authoritatively make changes.

### **Steps for Implementation**

#### *Step 1*

*Evaluate the strategic plan.* The first step in the implementation process is to step back and make sure that you know what the strategic plan is. Review it carefully, and highlight any elements of the plan that might be especially challenging. Recognize any parts of the plan that might be unrealistic or excessive in cost, either of time or money. Highlight these, and be sure to keep them in mind as you begin implementing the strategic plan. Keep back-up ideas in mind in case the original plan fails.

*Step 2*

*Create a vision for implementing the strategic plan.* This vision might be a series of goals to be reached, step-by-step, or an outline of items that need to be completed. Be sure to let everyone know what the end result should be and why it is important. Establish a clear image of what the strategic plan is intended to accomplish.

*Step 3*

*Select your Strategic Implementation Team.* Make sure you have a team that “has your back,” so to speak, and understands the purpose of the plan and the steps involved in implementing it. Establish a team leader, if other than yourself, who can encourage the team and field questions or address problems as they arise.

*Step 4*

*Schedule meetings to discuss progress reports.* Present the list of goals and/or objectives, and inform SIT of what has been accomplished. Whether the implementation is on schedule, ahead of schedule, or behind schedule, assess the current schedule regularly to discuss any changes that need to be made. Establish a rewards system that recognizes success throughout the process of implementation.

*Step 5*

*Involve the Church Leadership and congregation where appropriate.* Keep the congregation informed on what is happening, and provide progress reports on the

implementation of the plan. Letting the church body about the progress of implementation makes them a part of the process.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Although the Bible does not specifically address church growth, the book of Genesis speaks to the heart of God to develop and grow a chosen people who would be called out and set aside for the purpose of honoring and worshipping God. The Old Testament chronicles the journey of God's people to a Promised Land where the blessings of God would reign supreme in their hearts. In the New Testament, the principle of church growth is the understanding that Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Mt 16:18). Paul confirmed that the church has its foundation in Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:11). Christ is also the head of the church (Eph 1:18-23) and the church's life (Jn 10:10). It should be remembered that "growth" could be a relative term. There are different kinds of growth, some of which have nothing to do with numbers.<sup>1</sup>

According to Got Questions.org, a church can be alive and growing even though the number of members/attendees is not changing. If those in the church are growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, submitting to His will for their lives, both individually and corporately, that is a church that is experiencing true growth. At the same time, a church can be adding to its rolls weekly, have huge numbers, and still be spiritually stagnant. Growth of any kind follows a typical pattern. As with a growing

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<sup>1</sup>Got Questions.org, "What Does the Bible Say About Church Growth, accessed May 3, 2015, <http://www.gotquestions.org/church-growth.html>.

organism, the local church has those who plant the seed (evangelists), those who water the seed (pastor/teachers), and others who use their spiritual gifts for the growth of those in the local church. But note that it is God who gives the increase (1 Cor 3:7). Those who plant and those who water will each receive their own reward according to their labor (1 Cor 3:8).

### **Old Testament**

The biblical foundations for this project seek to provide scriptural evidence of God's plan of salvation through the growth of the church; spiritually and numerically. The Old Testament passage, Genesis 12:1-3 will provide an understanding of God's intention to grow a people through blessings received as a result of obedience to the will of God. The operative methodology of this particular text is grounded in planting "seeds" that when fully matured gives way to blessings in the midst of life's challenges.

In John Hamilton's work, "The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham, Hamilton uncovers the process of the growth of humanity as a result of the seeds of life being planted, cultivated and harvested. This work, according to Hamilton sets the tone and direction for the entire book of Genesis.

Now the LORD said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Gn 12:1-3).

Although God cursed Adam, Eve and the serpent because of disobedience, blessings would not be denied them provided their offspring would live and follow God's commands. From Genesis 3 to Genesis 11 conflict, confusion and chaos occurred



multiple times. Genesis 3:15 introduce enmity between the serpent and the woman and between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. The final clause of Genesis 3:15 states that the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head, while the serpent will crush the heel of the seed of the woman. The term seed is a collective singular, meaning that it always appears in the singular whether it has a plural or a singular referent.<sup>2</sup>

Genesis 11:30 informs the reader that Sarai was barren, but for the promise in 12:2 that Abram will become a great nation to be realized, children will have to be born. It eventually becomes clear that God intends to reverse Sarai's barrenness (17:15-21). Prior to this, however, Sarai's barrenness provides an occasion for the curse in 3:16 to be worked out as she takes the initiative regarding what the family should do by telling Abram to go in to Hagar (16:1-4). Abram complies with his wife's desires, but this leads only to more conflict between himself and Sarai (16:5-6). The promise that Abram will become a great nation is a promise that the curses of Genesis 3:16—that the woman will have pain and that she will desire her husband but he will rule over her—will be overcome.<sup>3</sup>

The command for Abram to go to the land he will be shown and the promise that he will be made a great nation (12:1-2) imply that land will be given, and this becomes explicit in 12:7 when YHWH promises to give the land to Abram's seed. This Promised Land relates to the curse on the ground in Genesis 3:17-19, which signaled the loss of Eden (cf. 3:23). The loss of Eden means exile from God's presence, but God later renews

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<sup>2</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., "The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," *Tyndale Bulletin*, 58 no 2: 254, accessed May 31, 2015, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials.

<sup>3</sup> Hamilton, "The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," 256-259.

his dwelling among Israel by taking up residence in the Tabernacle. Once the people enter the land, God will dwell in a Temple. In the New Creation, the dwelling of God will be with men (Rev 21:3). So when we consider God's presence, there appears to be a trajectory from Eden to Tabernacle to Land and Temple to New Creation.<sup>4</sup>

We must also note that the promises made to Abraham are passed on to his seed, and as the narrative unfolds these promises are clarified. What has been promised comes into sharper focus as the original blessings are restated with new promises layered onto the old ones. Genesis 12:3 states, “And all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you.” This promise is restated in Genesis 18:18, and in 22:18a it is passed on to Isaac, “And all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in your seed” (cf. 21:12). Isaac, too, is told that in his seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed, which passes the promise on to Jacob (26:4). Like Abraham, Isaac is told that the land will be given to his seed, and YHWH promises to establish for him what was sworn to Abraham (26:3). Isaac then blesses Jacob (27:26-29, cf. 27:29c and 12:3a).<sup>5</sup>

The seed blessing is an important aspect of salvation history as described in the book of Genesis. The seed, which was originally cursed, would later become a source of bountiful blessing, as God's chosen people would chart a path forward toward the Promised Land. Today, the seed of blessing can be interpreted as the birthing or planting of new churches in new locations to be a blessing to those who are called the children of God.

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<sup>4</sup> Hamilton, “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” 259.

<sup>5</sup> Hamilton, “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” 262.

*Genesis: The Book of Beginnings*

Genesis may be rightly called “The book of beginnings.” In the opening eleven chapters we witnessed the beginning of God’s creation, the beginning of the human race, the beginning of marriage and family, and (sadly) the beginning of human sin. The very air we breathe—both literal and figurative air—has its origins in Genesis 1–11. The book of beginnings is also synonymous with church beginnings. Every local church has a beginning, and as witnessed in the book of Genesis, beginnings emerge into a larger picture where the focus expands from the seedbed of life to the establishment of the basic family unit and ultimately God’s chosen people.

Chapter 12, signals a new beginning. In this chapter we find the earliest shoots in the Jewish family tree. Since “salvation is from the Jews” (Jn 4:22). Genesis 12 and following offer us the initial blueprints of God’s great plan of salvation. When we read about God’s calling of Abram, we are not simply given a lesson in history. We are actually tracing a story line that takes us all the way to the Lord Jesus himself.

So the calling of Abram—the beginning of the nation of Israel—is a story of tremendous significance. “Abram, I want you to pack up your things and move. I want you to leave behind your homeland, along with the culture and language you’ve known all your life. I want you to leave your relatives, too. And make sure you gather together all your possessions because you won’t ever be coming back to this house your father worked so hard to build for you. I want you to leave it all, Abram—and come and follow me. And by the way, I’m not going to tell you where we’re going until we get there.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kurt Strassner, *Opening up Genesis*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2009).

If Abram was anything like most of us, he could have thought of all sorts of excuses and arguments for why he should not go. “Surely the LORD does not want me to do *that*. I must have misheard him. God wouldn’t ask me to leave everything I have ever known behind. I can obey and serve him just fine right here in beautiful Ur.” But what a lesson there is in his obedience! He went forward, not because it made sense; not because it was easy; not because it seemed the most feasible way to raise a family; but simply because God said so! That is the essence of faith (Heb 11:8)—obedience to God’s commandments even when we do not know what obedience will bring.

God revealed his will for worldwide redemption, and all the nations would find their blessing in what he would do through his promises to Abraham. God reinforced his promises to Abraham several times and in a number of different ways. The promises would not come instantly or all at once, but they would gradually be realized over a period of thousands of years. Because that slow unfolding of God’s promises could cause believers to weaken in their faith and desire an affirmation of God’s faithfulness, God consistently and repeatedly affirmed his promises to Abraham and his offspring.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Call of Abraham and the Abrahamic Covenant*

God's motive for calling Abram is perplexing. As God he has no need to ask anything of anyone, hence the traditional belief supplies no obvious information and so has not been scrutinized. But in the light of the parallel between God's response to the generation before the flood and to the tower builders, one thing stands out about Abraham's call; obedience to the will of God.

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<sup>7</sup> Robert B. Hughes and J. Carl Laney, *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary, The Tyndale Reference Library* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001).

The call of Abraham and the subsequent covenant with him were not only about blessing as a result of obedience, but they constitute the key to the subsequent history of Israel and God's purpose in relation to the saints. From the standpoint of eschatology, the Abrahamic covenant is important for many reasons, but it is crucial in its evidence regarding God's purpose for Israel. The provisions of the Abrahamic covenant are outlined in their main factors in Genesis 12:2, 3, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." As many writers have indicated, this covenant includes seven provisions: 1) the promise of a great nation through Abraham; 2) personal blessing on Abraham; 3) the name of Abraham shall be great; 4) Abraham is to be a blessing to others; 5) blessing will rest on those blessing Abraham; 6) a curse will rest on those who curse Abraham; and 7) all nations of the earth will be blessed through Abraham.<sup>8</sup>

Four things stand out in the original covenant: 1) the national promises given to Israel; 2) the personal promises given to Abraham; 3) the principle of blessing or cursing upon nations other than Israel based on their attitude toward Abraham and his seed; and 4) the promise of universal blessing through Abraham, fulfilled through Christ.

The Abrahamic covenant was subject to enlargement and increased detail in subsequent revelations of Scripture. In Genesis 13:14-17, Abraham is promised title to "all the land which thou seest," "forever," and the promise concerning his seed is amplified in that he is promised seed comparable in number to the dust of the earth. In Genesis 15:1-7, the line of the seed is designated as through Abraham rather than Eliezer,

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<sup>8</sup> John F Walvoord, "The Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant," *Bibliotheca sacra*, 102 no. 405 Jan-Mar 1945: 27-36, accessed June 4, 2015, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials.

his servant, and the promise of the land is reiterated. In Genesis 17:1-18, further important provisions are made: 1) The covenant is solemnly confirmed; 2) Abram is given the name Abraham as a symbol of the promise that he will be the father of many nations, i.e., nations other than the nation which will inherit the land; 3) Kings are promised to the seed of Abraham; 4) All the land of Canaan is given to the seed of Abraham for an everlasting possession; and 5) A personal and special relationship is set up between God and the seed of Abraham in which God promises to be their God.

The Abrahamic covenant is not only inclusive of the main features of God's program for the ages, but it is the ground for many future covenants. The covenant in respect to the land is enlarged in the Palestinian covenant (Dt 28:1-30:20) to which there are many collateral references and doctrines. The covenant in respect to the future kings to issue from Abraham is given a specific turn in the promises to David in the Davidic covenant, concerning his kingdom and seed. The covenant in respect to the nation Israel as a whole is the subject of many prophecies of scripture of which a notable illustration is Jeremiah 31:36-37.

The covenant in respect to spiritual blessings on the seed of Abraham and all the families of the earth is the theme of the prophets who picture not only blessing on the Gentiles through Christ but the re-gathering and blessing upon the nation Israel (cf. Jer 31:31-37). The ground of all these covenants is the Abrahamic, and for this reason the principles illustrated in its fulfillment and the content of its revelation constitute one of the important determining factors of all prophecy. It is safe to say that all systems of prophetic interpretation especially as regarding unfulfilled prophecy are determined in their main features by their attitude toward the Abrahamic covenant.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Walvoord, "The Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant," 27-36.

### *God's Chosen People*

God's Chosen People can be traced back to the Old Testament. Alan Richardson rightly discusses God's choice of Israel with the heading of "Election." God is the one that makes the choice; He does the election. What he means is that divine election, even when it is for a king, or judge or a prophet, a charismatic call or office, is for a function in society. It is the society that God chooses and for that chosen society or community that a person is specially called forth to serve; he is not given a special privilege but a special duty. The primary choice is for a people who are a personal possession of Yahweh (Ex 19:5; Dt 5 7:6; 14:2).

The choice of a people as a personal possession of God, not on the grounds of the people's merit is found in Yahweh-Israel relationship. God chooses Israel because He loves Israel {agao pan, LXX, Deut. 7:6—8). God redeemed Israel from Egypt and made her laos hagnos kuriö(i) (Dt 7:6) in order that she might serve God (Dt 7:11) and his purpose for the nations (e.g. Is 45:4—6, cf. Is 42:6). God's choice of Israel as His special personal possession is sealed with a covenant. A misunderstanding of the import of the covenantal relationship led to a particularism that played down the "service" to the world unto which Israel was called. The exilic experience reawakened her sense of mission to the world as the chosen people of God as Isaiah exemplifies in the role of the servant of Yahweh (Is 42:6).<sup>10</sup>

Associated with the divine choice or election is the remnant idea. When it was believed that the Messiah would not come until all the laws of God were perfectly kept, a

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<sup>10</sup> George E. Okeke, "The Church as Community as God's Chosen People," *Communio Viatorum*, 30, no. 3-4 Winter 1987:199-213, accessed May 31, 2015, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials.

community of pious ones or communities of those who separated themselves from the masses of the people bound themselves together (yaqad) as representatives of the people of God to punctiliously observe Yahweh's laws and statutes. It was not only the Qumran covenanters but also other Chasidim that understood themselves as having a divine vocation to be in the world and yet not of the world. The small group of followers of Jesus Christ inherited all these ideas. At first, these men who were called (kaleö and the cognates) did not give a particular name or title to themselves. Other teachers of Jesus's time, even John the Baptist, had followers. But, when they knew the person who called them, their call and the choice acquired a new dimension. They began to have a new self-understanding.

The book of Genesis, while not specifically speaking to the church of today, it provides the foundation and prophetic formation out of which the church would later emerge after the ascension of Jesus and the day of Pentecost. The establishment of the church is the foundation from which the seed of humanity will grow and make known the will of God.

## **New Testament**

### *Chronology of the Growth of the Church in Acts*

Prior to the day of Pentecost, the scripture records Jesus admonishing his followers “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and instructed



them for forty days, after which he ascended to heaven. While with them, he said: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-5). That first baptism of the Spirit would be the birthday of the church.

In the days immediately after the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the 120 believers in Jerusalem at Pentecost, when they began to preach the Gospel, we read this: “Many of those who heard the Word believed, and the number of the men came to be about five thousand” (Acts 4:4). Just a short time later, we read: “The Word of God spread, and [as a result] the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the [Jewish] priests”—men who had been the enemies of Christ during His earthly ministry—“a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). A short time later, the church at Jerusalem was being scattered because of persecution. They were fleeing to other parts of the Roman world because of that persecution. And what do they do, as they go? What do they do, even in the face of persecution? “Those who were scattered went everywhere, preaching the Word” (Acts 8:4). And then a bit later we find: “The Word of God grew and multiplied” (Acts 12:24). The church grew and multiplied because the Word of God grew and multiplied—the seed of the Word was sown, and it bore fruit.

### *The Word Spreads and Prevails at Ephesus*

The account of Paul's journey to Ephesus in Acts chapter 19, we read in verse 8 that Paul “went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and

persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.” Paul was ready to give an answer for the hope that was within him. And then a few verses later we read that there was a moving of God among those in Ephesus who had made their living by practicing spiritism, the black arts. Verse 18 says, “And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic [that is, spiritism] brought their books together and [they] burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

That was over 160 years' wages for the average laborer in that day—a phenomenal amount of money. At today's minimum wage rate, it would be \$2.9 million. For the average wage earner today, it would be over \$7 million. Millions of dollars' worth of the most sinful kinds of books—burned in the fire. Burning these books meant that these people were giving up their livelihood; spiritism was a very lucrative profession in the Roman world. These people were giving it all up—a multi-million-dollar business, in modern terms; they turning their backs on it. What was happening? In the next verse, Luke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit tells us exactly what was happening: “In this way, the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed” (Acts 19:20).<sup>11</sup>

### *The Unchained Word*

Postmodern Evangelicals must grasp the pattern of evangelism and church growth we find in Acts: “Many of those who heard the Word believed.” The Word of God spread, and those who were scattered went everywhere, preaching the Word. The Word of God grew and multiplied. The Word of God grew mightily and prevailed. The driving force

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<sup>11</sup> Grace Communion International, “Pentecost: The Birth of the Church, accessed June 4, 2014, <https://www.gci.org/history/birth>.

behind the growth and development of the New Testament church was the expository preaching of the Word.<sup>12</sup>

Later in his life, Paul wrote his second epistle to Timothy. Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:8-9 that because of the Gospel, he suffered trouble and was treated as an evildoer, even to the point of being in prison and in chains. But, he said, “The Word of God is not chained.” The world may do what it wants, as God allows it. The world may look on Christians as evildoers—and we certainly see that attitude in our society today. But, Paul says, let the world do its utmost to suppress the truth—the Word of God is not chained! It is the Word of God that is alive, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. It is the Word of God that gets to the heart of the issues of life. It is the Word of God that is the critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart.<sup>13</sup>

### *Growth Through Believing God's Promise*

God has promised in Isaiah 55:11: “My Word that goes forth shall not return to me void”—it shall not return to Me empty, it shall not return to Me without fruit, without result. “But it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” The people and leaders of a scripture-driven church understand that God honors His Word. They understand that it is as the Word prospers and grows, and prevails, that the church prospers and grows and prevails. It is as the Word of God accomplishes His purpose, that the church accomplishes its God-ordained purpose. The early church understood this. And it was as the early church stayed on message, on mission, and on the battlefield, that the Word of God accomplished great things by the power of the Holy

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<sup>12</sup> Grace Communion International, “Pentecost: The Birth of the Church.”

<sup>13</sup> Grace Communion International, “Pentecost: The Birth of the Church.”

Spirit.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, as the church stays on message and mission today, multiple site church opportunities are made available because the Word of God will not come back void.

### *Growth Through the Mission of the Church*

The Great Commission of Matthew 28 and the opening lines of Acts serve as justification for missionary endeavors or the expansion of the church. A preliminary explanation is needed concerning the definition of the term mission. There is considerable debate regarding the term in missiological circles, which prompts all of us to clarify our use of the term. Surely the first thing we notice in Acts is that mission does not belong to the church. It is not the church who sends, but God who sends. That is not to deny or denigrate the role played in Acts by the Holy Spirit, whose coming at Pentecost prompts the first of Peter's sermons and the first mass conversion. The reception of the Spirit by Cornelius and his household convinces Peter that baptism cannot be denied them. At a number of points Paul and his colleagues receive explicit and specific guidance from the Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

The risen Lord also takes part in the sending of believers. This is indicated in the pre-Ascension dialogue with the disciples, but it becomes more direct in the narratives of Paul's conversion. In the third account, Jesus himself not only confronts Paul, but also announces to him the nature of the work he is to do (26:16-18). While it is important that we keep in mind the particular actions ascribed to God, to the Spirit and to the risen Lord,

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<sup>14</sup> Grace Communion International, "Pentecost: The Birth of the Church."

<sup>15</sup> Angelyn Dries, *Mission Studies*, 26 no. 1, 2009:123-124, accessed June 4, 2014, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials.

for Luke, these are all ways of saying that God is in control of the mission. Luke is less interested in a systematic doctrine of the Trinity than he is in making it perfectly clear who is in charge. Luke establishes at the outset of Acts that the mission is from God. Just prior to the Ascension, he writes: So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority” (1:6-7).<sup>16</sup>

Notice that Jesus not only tells them that the answer to that question is none of their business, but establishes that God is the one who designates “times and seasons.” At the outset of his Pentecost sermon, Peter quotes from Joel to explain what is occurring. He follows the Septuagint of Joel closely, with a couple of significant exceptions. One is at the very beginning. The text of Joel reads, “And after these things it shall be, that I shall pour out my Spirit . . .” Luke, however, has altered Joel to read: “And it shall be in the last days God says, that I shall pour out my Spirit. . .” Luke's slight change interprets the coming of the Spirit as an eschatological act, which God had initiated. The evidence I have given thus far might allow us to think that Luke is simply acknowledging God's role in mission in a perfunctory way. Luke tips his hat, so to speak, to the one who announced that there would be a mission and later turned that mission over to the church. On the contrary, God's action is emphasized by contrast to the relative inaction of the church.

In the Ascension narrative Jesus tells the apostles, “You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” Although we sometimes read this statement as a command, it is actually a promise. The verb is

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<sup>16</sup> Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “You Will Be My Witnesses: Aspects of Mission in the Acts of the Apostles,” accessed June 4, 2014, Peer reviewed, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials.

indicative rather than imperative; more important, the statement occurs in a context where other promises are found (the coming of the Holy Spirit, the return of Jesus). Certainly the apostles do not appear to regard this as a command. Nowhere in Acts does anyone appeal to this statement to justify an aspect of the church's proclamation. Instead, it stands at the beginning of Luke's narrative as a summary of what follows. Not only does the church not appeal to this statement, it seems to feel no urgency about moving beyond Jerusalem. Believers stay in Jerusalem until forced out. Even then, the apostles stay behind and others carry the word to Judea and Samaria. Philip receives a direct order to seek out the Ethiopian eunuch. Ananias protests a similar order regarding Paul. Peter righteously refuses to see the handwriting on the wall (or in the sheet!) concerning the Gentiles. After that, Paul and his fellow workers seek out Gentiles, only following Jewish rejection of the gospel.<sup>17</sup>

Jürgen Moltmann has written that the church does not have a mission; the mission has a church (1977:10). While that statement moves in the right direction, it does not go far enough. Mission as described by Luke is certainly not a function of the church, it almost develops in spite of the church! But there is also not an independent mission that gives birth to the church. Rather in Acts, God has a mission for the church, or as David Bosch says, "Mission is the action of God in which the church shares and which belongs to the essential nature and character of the church."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Grace Communion International, "Pentecost: The Birth of the Church."

<sup>18</sup> Grace Communion International, "Pentecost: The Birth of the Church."

### *Mission as Witness*

While it is accurate to say that God has a mission for the church that is not Lukan language. For Luke, the appropriate term would be “witness” rather than “mission.” Both at the end of the Gospel of Luke and at the beginning of Acts, the risen Lord designates the apostles by this term, and witness is the term that dominates Luke's understanding of the proclaimer's role. *Martus*, the Greek noun for someone who witnesses or gives testimony, figures prominently in descriptions of the apostles' work. Judas' replacement is to become, with the others, a witness to Jesus' resurrection (1:22). When Peter's early sermons announce the resurrection of Jesus, they are punctuated with the remark that “we are witnesses” of these things (2:32; 3:15; 5:32; cf. 10:39; 10:41). Later Paul refers to the apostles in the same way (13:31) and is himself designated a witness of Jesus (22:15; 26:16). Luke's use of *oimartus* draws on the legal meaning of the term. In one sense, then, the apostles and Paul are giving evidence for their claims about God. The judicial content of *oimartus* does not exhaust Luke's use of the term, however. For Luke, witnessing is the prime activity of mission.<sup>19</sup>

What the witness does is to tell the truth to the world about God's action in Jesus Christ. “Telling the truth” involves both word and deed. Those frequent and lengthy sermons should not mislead us. The inclusion of speeches in ancient writings was a common method of conveying one's point. That Luke employs the method does not mean that he thought the gospel could only be conveyed through words. He also frequently mentions the “signs and wonders” that occurred among believers. Although Luke describes words and the deeds of the witnesses as being powerful, they are by no means always “successful.” Sometimes the mass conversions of the early chapters of Acts lead

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<sup>19</sup> Grace Communion International, “Pentecost: The Birth of the Church.”

us to miss his point. But those mass conversions soon fall away, and the response to the witness is at best mixed. By the time Paul preaches in Athens, even those who respond positively to his sermon say only that they will listen to him again (17:32). Luke often comments that the “Word of the Lord” grew and multiplied, but that is not always true of the witness or the church.<sup>20</sup>

### *Mission and Culture*

In order for people to turn “from darkness to light,” they must hear a word that truly communicates. Even as Luke understood mission to be God-given and God-directed so that its messengers spoke with boldness even in the face of adversity, the question now is how the message itself is conveyed. Luke portrays a mission that is adaptable to culture, and the mission takes on different forms in different contexts. The early sermons of Acts, set in Jerusalem and before a thoroughly Jewish audience, interpret Jesus by means of the history and the scripture of Israel. Jesus is greater than David by virtue of God's having raised him from the dead (2:24-36), and he is described as the servant of “the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob” (3:13). While these sermons clearly blame the people of Jerusalem for Jesus' crucifixion, they also claim that their treatment of Jesus took place in accordance with God's will and plan (2:23; 3:14-18), so that these sermons place Jesus within the messianic expectations of the people.

Preaching to the Diaspora alters this pattern slightly. At Pisidian Antioch Paul elaborates on the guilt of “those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers” (13:27), admitting that the people were fulfilling what had been written concerning the Messiah, but this is a slight concession (13:29). The burden of the sermon is that the Diaspora Jews should not

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<sup>20</sup> Grace Communion International, “Pentecost: The Birth of the Church.”



act as had their coreligionists in Jerusalem. Paul's preaching at Athens contrasts dramatically with both Peter's early sermons in Jerusalem and Paul's sermon at Pisidian Antioch. He begins, not with the history of Israel or with the prophecies regarding the Messiah, but with the beliefs of the Athenians: "I perceive that in every way you are very religious" (17:22), thus starting with a point that the Athenians accept and employing philosophical language in order to introduce his understanding of God. Paul does not announce that the Messiah has come, for such a proclamation has power only when its hearers know what that title means and wait for that coming. Instead he declares that the unknown God is God.

In all these instances, Luke describes a mission that is willing and able to speak in a language that can be heard. The message does not exist in one language or in a single cultural system. It is equally clear, however, that there are limits to this adaptability. Paul and Barnabas quickly repudiate those at Lystra who take them to be divine because they heal a cripple (14:8-18). Demetrius, the silversmith who leads the riot at Ephesus, rightly is hostile to the Christian proclamation (19:23ff). Paul and his colleagues would not present Jesus as another God any more than they would make themselves God; thus they constitute a threat to any who claim to create God. In order for people to turn "from darkness to light," they must hear a word that truly communicates. Even as Luke understood mission to be God-given and God-directed so that its messengers spoke with boldness even in the face of adversity, the question now is how the message itself is conveyed. Luke portrays a mission that is adaptable to culture, and the mission takes on different forms in different contexts.

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From the Old Testament foundational scripture, we discuss how God's chosen people populated the earth. In the midst of rebellion and not being able to keep God's commands, the text is clear that God's will for his people is greater than our ability to obey. In spite of disobedience and rebellion, God establishes a covenant with the children of Israel, and from that seed, they were able to enter the Promised Land, just as God said. However, continued disobedience and rebellion led to the people suffering at the hand of

other tribes but eventually, God remembers his promise and makes provisions for his people to prosper and continue to grow.

The New Testament chronicles the birth and growth of the church based on the disciples and followers of Jesus being willing to witness throughout the earth. From the original faithful few (120) the church was born and because of their witness, many were added to the number that was being saved on a daily basis. The book of Acts provides proof and the fulfillment of prophecy that the seed of God will continue to grow despite the various setbacks and roadblocks placed in their way. In Acts, Luke explains that God is in charge of mission and the mission of God, which is articulated in the Great Commission, is greater than the church out of which mission is to take place. Therefore, if the church stays on point and does the work that God has called it to do, the growth of the church will continue to flourish and the opportunity for multiple site churches being established will continue to increase as long as the people continue to witness.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The early eighteenth century witnessed an evangelical revival in England. Heretofore, there was what was called “spiritual lethargy” in the established Church of England and those who were labeled as dissenters. “Rationalism had penetrated all classes of religious thinkers, so that even among the orthodox, Christianity seemed little more than a system of morality supported by divine sanctions.”<sup>1</sup> The typical sermon was cold and colorless. There was very little evangelism that was taking place and the condition of the lower classes was one of spiritual destitution. “Popular amusements were course, illiteracy widespread, law savage in its enforcement, jails sinks of disease and iniquity. Drunkenness was more prevalent than at any other period in English history.”<sup>2</sup>

There were people who wanted a change, and several men were looking for better things. Among them were William Law, who opposed Deism and authored *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* in 1728 and Isaac Watts (1674-1748), a theologian who has been called the founder of modern English hymnody. His hymns express a deep and vital piety.

It was during that century that there were some combined efforts of significance that were being made for a warmer religious life. Religious societies sprang up, the

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<sup>1</sup> Williston Walker and Richard A. Norris, Lotz, and Handy, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), 596.

<sup>2</sup> Walker, Norris, Lotz, and Handy, *A History of the Christian Church*, 597.

earliest of which was formed by a group of young men in London about 1678. They gathered for prayer, reading the scriptures, the cultivation of a religious life, frequent communion, to aid the poor and to soldiers, sailors, and prisoners, and encouragement of preaching. The societies spread rapidly and by 1700, there were nearly a hundred in London. Samuel Wesley, who was John Wesley's father, formed one of the societies in 1702. Many considered the movements as enthusiastic. The term used today would be fanatical. The societies were the beginnings of Methodism.

Though the societies spread through England and Ireland, their influence was only partial. "The mass of the people of England was in spiritual lethargy, yet blindly conscious of sin and convinced of the reality of future reward and retribution. Emotions of loyalty to Christ, of salvation through him, of a present transforming faith had not been aroused. It needed the appeal of vivid spiritual earnestness, directed to conviction of the heart rather than to considerations of prudence or cold argument."<sup>3</sup> What resulted was an evangelical revival, that was the first signs of an awakening in the eighteenth century. As the movement gained strength, three great leaders emerged: John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. For the next forty years, the movement advanced in three identifiable but closely related strands, all related to the established Church of England: the Methodist societies under the Wesley's, the Calvinistic Methodists under Whitefield, and the Anglican Evangelicals, who operated along more traditional parish lines. It was in 1779 that the first formal separations of any of these strands from the Church of England occurred.

Historically in America, the multi-site church began through the teachings of John Wesley and the role of Methodism has helped expand the church in America.

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<sup>3</sup> Walker, Norris, Lotz, and Handy, *A History of the Christian Church*, 598.

“About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed.”<sup>4</sup> John Wesley stated these words after he felt the move of God through the teaching of God’s Holy Word. In 1735, John Wesley, a young Anglican minister found himself on a ship traveling from England to what was then called the New World. He was traveling due to an invitation to serve as pastor to colonist in Georgia. While traveling, the ship encompassed bad weather, Wesley the Chaplain on board, notice that a group of passengers were not afraid. In fact, throughout the storm, they sang calmly. When the trip ended, he asked the Moravian leader about his serenity, and the Moravian responded with a question: Did he, Wesley, have faith in Christ? Wesley said he did, but later reflected, “I fear they were vain words.”<sup>5</sup>

Wesley was born to an Anglican home and learned religion from his mother and father. Wesley later went on to attend Oxford University, excelled in academics, and became ordained into the Anglican Church. While attending Oxford, he joined a group called the “holy club” which was founded by his brother Charles Wesley. The members of this club committed to live holy, take communion every week, and visit the outcast regularly. Upon leaving Oxford, is when Wesley traveled to Savannah to pastor. His first pastorate seems to be short lived, after a woman he dated married another man. When he tried to enforce the disciplines of the “holy club” on his church, the congregation rebelled. A bitter Wesley returned to England.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> M. Galli, & T. Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), Introduction.

<sup>5</sup> Galli, & Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*.

<sup>6</sup> Galli, & Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*.

After speaking to another Moravian named Peter Boehler, Wesley resolved, he lacked faith. But, on May 24, 1738, he experienced the move of God, and it changed his life forever. He journaled this event as follows: “In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change, which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”<sup>7</sup>

George Whitefield, who was also a member of the Holy Club, was having great success in ministry in the city of Bristol. Many of the working poor, and oppressed that felt neglected by the Church of England, were experiencing conversion through his preaching style. Under Whitefield’s preaching in Bristol, the church group and he soon needed help. Whitefield extended an invitation to Wesley, and soon, Wesley was working alongside Whitefield. In the beginning, Wesley was hesitant due to the response of the people to the preaching style of Whitefield. He distrusted Whitefield’s dramatic style; he questioned the propriety of Whitefield’s outdoor preaching (a radical innovation for the day); he felt uncomfortable with the emotional reactions even his own preaching elicited. But the orderly Wesley soon warmed to the new method of ministry.<sup>8</sup>

Because Wesley had a gift of organization, he soon became the new leader in Bristol. However, due to Whitefield’s affirmation to remain a Calvinist and Wesley could not accept the doctrine of predestination, Wesley argued (against Reformed doctrine) that Christians could enjoy entire sanctification in this life: loving God and their neighbors,

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<sup>7</sup> Galli, & Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*.

<sup>8</sup> Galli, & Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*.

meekness and lowliness of heart, abstaining from all appearance of evil, and doing all for the glory of God. In the end, the two preachers parted ways.<sup>9</sup>

The intent of John Wesley was not to start a new denomination, but the uniqueness of his mind worked against his desire. The followers of Wesley began to meet in private citizen homes and were often called societies. When these so-called societies grew larger than the ability to maintain them, Wesley developed what is often called “classes.” The way classes were organized was with a class leader and eleven class members. Classes met weekly and had prayer, Bible study, discussed the spiritual lives of the members and collected money. These classes, lead by a class leader had spiritual fervor and fire as expressed by Wesley most famous aphorism: “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”<sup>10</sup>

The movement grew quickly, but so did its critics, who called the followers of Wesley “Methodist.” This label of being Methodist became a badge of identity that they wore proudly. Beyond the name-calling, many Methodists were intimidated, threaten, and had meetings broken up. There were often threats on Wesley’s life. Wesley tried to schedule his preaching, which was itinerant, so it would not disrupt local Anglican services, however, it still remained a problem and was often objected to by the Bishop of Bristol. Wesley responded, “The world is my parish”—a phrase that later became a slogan of Methodist missionaries. Wesley, in fact, never slowed down, and during his

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<sup>9</sup> Galli, & Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*.

<sup>10</sup> Galli, & Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*.



ministry he traveled over 4,000 miles annually, and preached some 40,000 sermons in his lifetime.<sup>11</sup>

Some Anglican priest, including the brother of John Wesley, Charles Wesley, also joined the Methodist movement. Even with other priest becoming a part of the Methodist movement, the burden of the preaching fell on John. This forced him to utilize lay preachers, who were limited in their ability to do certain components in ministry. One item being that lay preachers were not able to serve communion and operated as assistants to the ordained clergy. Wesley continued to use his organizational skills by organizing the Methodist into a connection and some of the societies into circuits. The connection encompass all Methodist; these societies or churches were placed into circuits, which were multiple churches combined as one unit. These societies formed into circuits or under the leadership of a superintendent. Frequent meetings of the clergy and lay preachers turned into a yearly meeting called the Annual Conference. The Annual Conference allowed persons who served in ministry and opportunity to make reports and receive appointments to churches, usually for a term no more than three years.

By 1787, all lay preaches were listed as non-Anglican. But, on the other side of the Atlantic, the American Revolution prevented the Northern Methodist from their Anglican roots. To support the movement in America, Wesley ordained two lay preachers and appointed a superintendent by the name Thomas Coke.

The implications of John Wesley's ideas were revolutionary. Wesley described his decision to begin field preaching, a revolutionary method for taking the gospel to 18th

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<sup>11</sup> Galli, & Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*.

century Britain.<sup>12</sup> Wesley believed in going out to preach the Word of God. He went from town to town and often preached on the street to hundreds and thousands of individuals. His impact on the multi site movement was phenomenal, mostly due to Wesley's belief in clergy serving multiple locations. This concept called itinerancy became the backbone for spreading the gospel for the Methodist movement. Wesley died in 1791.

The historical context of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) began as the church was emancipated from St. Georges Episcopal Church by Richard Allen, Absalom Jones and others. The emergence of the Black Methodist movement so named for its distinctive methods of organization and its spiritual discipline began as a Holy Club of students at Christ Church College in Oxford University in the mid 1720's according to C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, in the book *The Black Church in the African American Experience*.<sup>13</sup> Within the context of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Church mothers and fathers began a unified mission to understand the covenant community of ecclesiology, Holy Trinity, salvation, the sacraments, the authority of scriptures and other crucial components of African Methodism. The founder of African Methodism, Richard Allen espoused the same views of John Wesley in the 39 Articles of Religion of the Church of England. However, the African Methodist Episcopal Church embraced only twenty-five of those Articles as their basic tenets of belief to promote unity within the church. Historically, from an early onset the African Methodist Episcopal church was born out of a wounded struggle for liberation.

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<sup>12</sup> B. J. Leonard, "Preaching in Historical Perspective," In *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 31.

<sup>13</sup> C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 45.

In opposition to the oppressive force of slavery the AME Church was founded. In 1787 Richard Allen and Absalom Jones and others withdrew from St. Georges' Methodist Episcopal Church. Allen's mission as an apostle of freedom was divinely inspired by God to lift from slavery people who were oppressed by bondage and racism.<sup>14</sup> Allen's ministry was not totally relegated in building churches, schools and mutual aid societies for his own sake. Allen took pride in gathering the people together to receive the Lord's deliverance and to serve God in a Promise Land of salvation even in places where the people were once enslaved.<sup>15</sup>

Allen took pride in gathering the people together to receive the Lord's deliverance and to serve God in a Promise land of salvation even in places where the people were once enslaved.<sup>16</sup> The dramatic exodus from St. George's Methodist's Church caused by thoughtless and deliberate acts of humiliation created quite a stir in the City of Brotherly Love.<sup>17</sup> It marked the Genesis of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>18</sup> On April 12, 1787, Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and others formed a group known as the free African Society (FAS), a pioneer organization.<sup>19</sup> The Free African Society was the first

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<sup>14</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 50.

<sup>15</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 50.

<sup>16</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 43.

<sup>17</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 43.

<sup>18</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 44.

<sup>19</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 44.

wavering step of people toward organized group life.<sup>20</sup> Besides worship, this group helped people of African descent to become more self-reliant, industrious, and thrifty.<sup>21</sup>

The African Methodist Episcopal Church embraces the Episcopal structure modeled leadership of John Wesley. The Motto of the AME Church is "*God Our Father, Christ Our Redeemer, the Holy Spirit Our Comforter, Humankind Our Family*" is a great summary of what the African Methodist Episcopal Church believes. The AME Church abbreviated to mean the African Methodist Episcopal Church founded by Richard Allen was born as a result of enslavement, adversities of racial indifferences and social justice in a day and time when it was not popular for Blacks and whites to worship together. While the AME Church was born as a result of enslavement, adversities of racial indifferences and social justice in a day and time when it was not popular for blacks and whites to worship together, the basic foundational tenets of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is yearned for wholeness in her willingness to affirm the suffering and the broken.

Historically the African American church has been at the center of the Black community. The role of the church has significantly changed, however, the history of the Black church is concretized in a liberating social justice movement. The history of multi-site ministry is not a new phenomenon and can be traced back to the Book of Acts. The title multi-site in and of itself is a contemporary title.

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<sup>20</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 44.

<sup>21</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 44.

### *Historical Assessment of the Multi-site Church*

Little serious work has been done either to establish historical precedent for multi-site churches or to discuss how such precedents are relevant. The case from church history generally consists of appeals to mission stations, Methodist circuit riders, and brand Sunday schools done by bus ministries. For example: historically, preachers have traveled between various churches to provide preaching and pastoral leadership. One such example is the Methodist circuit riders, which would travel on horseback to preach at multiple churches. Each of the multiple meeting places had local identity and leadership, with the pastor serving successively in the various sites. Francis Asbury (1745-1816), the founding bishop of American Methodism, traveled more than a quarter of a million miles on foot and horseback, preaching about sixteen thousand sermons as he worked his circuits.”<sup>22</sup>

The problem with this historical precedent is that the situation that faced the early Methodists was a lack of trained pastors to preach in all the churches. Such a dearth of pastors is hardly the case in America today, and there is no appeal to such a shortage of personnel as a reason for multi-site churches.<sup>23</sup>

### *Better Historical Support for Multi-Site Churches*

*Baptist Statements of Faith.* A better historical precedent for multi-site churches, to begin with, can be found in the emphasis on collaboration between congregationally governed churches and their denominations which can be found in historic statements of

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<sup>22</sup> Gregg R. Allison, “Theological Defense of Multisite,” *9 Marks*, accessed June 5 2015, <http://9marks.org/article/theological-defense-multi-site/>.

<sup>23</sup> Allison, “Theological Defense of Multisite.”

faith. For example, in 1644, the *First London Confession of Faith*, representing the seven Particular or Calvinistic Baptist churches in that city, was quite explicit about the cooperation that should characterize the churches. And although the particular congregations are distinct and several bodies, every one a compact and knit city in itself; yet they are all to walk by one and the same rule, and by all means convenient to have the counsel and help one of another in all needful affairs of the church, as members of one body in the common faith under Christ their only head.<sup>24</sup>

This emphasis continued fairly steadily throughout Baptist history and appears in the latest version of the *Baptist Faith and Message* (2000). Section 14 on cooperation affirms, Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

Multi-site churches embody this emphasis on strong connectionalism. Certainly, the documents cited above call for unity between separate churches. But is it not possible to achieve that strong connectionalism more readily through the multi-site approach?

*Connectionalism and Cooperation.* This element of strong connectionalism among multi-site proponents arises out of an intense longing for cooperation—as strong as it is *for* interdependence as it is *against* the fierce independence and exaggerated

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<sup>24</sup> Allison, “Theological Defense of Multisite.”

<sup>25</sup> Allison, “Theological Defense of Multisite.”

autonomy promoted by rugged American individualism in evidence in a growing number of churches today. Multi-site pastors and churches 1) desire deeply to live life and engage in ministry together; 2) repudiate strongly the fierce autonomy that has typified many independent churches in the past; and 3) reject the formalized structures for cooperation between churches (e.g., local ministerial groups, state associations) that currently exist. Too often, they find these networks bureaucratically heavy-handed, ponderously slow, and even incapable of offering realistic help, and staffed by incompetent workers. Thus, they expand their ministries through multi-site churches that enjoy a strong connectionalism.<sup>26</sup>

As these pastors and churches develop a vision for expanding their ministries in order to impact more people, a basic dissatisfaction with traditional models of planting churches directs them to search for a different way. They find the concept of multi-site churches attractive. For instance, one church exists in various locations or campuses, and the pastoral teams of the various sites engage in ministry together by meeting weekly, sharing ministerial resources, encouraging personal accountability, fostering pastoral cooperation through the preparation of sermons together, addressing problems, distributing monies from a shared budget, and the like. They sense that this strong connectionalism is more biblical than the far too prevalent reality of fiercely independent churches competing with one another and denouncing the attempts of other churches to intervene in their local matters, even when such intervention is sorely needed.<sup>27</sup>

*Multi-site Baptists in Seventeenth-Century England.* Some more concrete precedents for multi-site churches can be found in seventeenth-century British Baptist

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<sup>26</sup> Allison, "Theological Defense of Multisite."

<sup>27</sup> Allison, "Theological Defense of Multisite."

history. In his Southern Baptist Theological Seminary PhD dissertation, Hugh Wamble writes, “It was normal for a local church to have a scattered constituency and to be composed of several congregations. For convenience or protection, the membership was divided into several parts for worship.”<sup>28</sup>

This arrangement was particularly prominent throughout Britain during times of persecution such as the Restoration. In rural areas also, the conventicles or small congregations were parts of the originating church. For example, the Ilston church (Wales) of John Miles consisted of widely scattered congregations: Abergavenny, Llanwenarth, Llangibby, Aberavon, Llanddewi, and Llanelly. In many such cases, one pastor would preach at these various sites, engaging in itineration for the conventicles. Occasionally, a number of capable preachers served multiple congregations. Consideration of these historical precedents may help to dispel the notion that the contemporary multi-site church phenomenon is merely the latest (twentieth- and twenty-first century) fad fueled by business models of franchising and branding, a lust for notoriety, or other insidious reasons.

### *Multi-site Linked to History and Scripture*

According to the writers of *The Multi-site Church Revolution: being One Church in Many Locations*, the approach to multi-site is not new. They posit that some argue that the church of the New Testament era was multi-site in many cities. According to the authors, “The word of God does not have to be read live to be active. The Word, energized by the Holy Spirit, can be printed or spoken, recorded on a CD, downloaded on an iPod, or transmitted by satellite. Because it is God’s Word, it—like God—transcends

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<sup>28</sup> Allison, “Theological Defense of Multisite.”



time, ‘For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God’ (1Pt 1:23).<sup>29</sup>

Surrant, Ligon, and Bird go on to say that the idea of “one church, many location” began with the persecution of the first Christian-followers in Jerusalem. When Stephen was put to death and the believers scattered a new congregation was formed in Antioch. The Antioch group was not seen as a separate body but as an extension of the Jerusalem church and functioned under the authority of Peter and the apostles in Jerusalem. Barnabas effectively became the first campus pastor when he was sent to Antioch to care for the new congregation. As the good news spread throughout Asia and into Europe, new congregations were formed, but they were all connected back to the church at Jerusalem as evidenced by the council that was held in Acts 15.<sup>30</sup>

It was not uncommon for these congregations to all experience the same teaching when they met together. Paul wrote to the church at Colosse, “After this letter had been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea” (Col 4:16). Paul used letters to communicate with the various churches because they were the best tools available in his time. It is not hard to imagine Paul using DVDs, videoconferences, and satellite feeds to spread the gospel if he were in the twenty-first century North America.<sup>31</sup>

The multisite movement today shows no signs of slowing down, according to Leadership Network surveys. The first significant wave of multisite churches started coming onto the North American church scene roughly two decades ago. In the

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<sup>29</sup> Surrant, Ligon, Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution*, 91.

<sup>30</sup> Surrant, Ligon, Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution*, 92

<sup>31</sup> Surrant, Ligon, Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution*, 92.

1980s there were well under 100 and in the 1990s at most 200. During the 2000s growth increased at a rapid pace with the greatest number of multi-sites being birthed with the last ten years. “Multi-site allows churches to grow and reach more areas much faster than a single gathering place.”<sup>32</sup>

Multisite is also thriving elsewhere around the world. “By God’s grace, most everything is working right now in our multi-site model,” says a church leader in the Philippines. “We are seeing growth across almost all our satellites, in spite of having just opened a new 10,000-seat facility. We have planted at least ten new satellites this year, including several outside of our own country.” Indeed, in the global mega-church list, over a third are multi-site. Many offer services in more than one language as well.<sup>33</sup>

The vast majority of multi-site churches are growing, according to a new study, and they are seeing more involvement from laypeople and newcomers after they open an additional location. Nearly one in ten U.S. Protestants attends a congregation with multiple campuses, according to findings released March 11 in the “Leadership Network /Generis Multisite Church Scorecard.” The report cites new data from the National Congregations Study, which found there were 8,000 multisite churches in the United States in 2012—up from 5,000 in 2010—including churches with more than one gathering on the same campus.<sup>34</sup> Churches that have created additional worship space in a

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<sup>32</sup> Warren Bird, “Leadership Network/Generis Multisite Church Scorecard,” accessed June 5, 2015, [http://leadnet.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/03/2014\\_LN\\_Generis\\_Multisite\\_Church\\_Scorecard\\_Report\\_v2.pdf](http://leadnet.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/03/2014_LN_Generis_Multisite_Church_Scorecard_Report_v2.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Bird, “Leadership Network/Generis Multisite Church.”

<sup>34</sup> Adelle M. Banks, “Multi-Site Church Model Still Vital Study Shows,” *Christian Century*, 131 no. 8, Apr 2014:16, accessed June 5, 2015, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASeris.

separate setting now exist in almost every state, several Canadian provinces, and dozens of other countries.

Multi-site churches typically operate with a main campus headed by the senior minister and one or more satellite locations. In some settings, attendees at the satellite location watch the same sermon, which is beamed in from the central location, but have their own dedicated on-site pastor, music, and small group meetings. The scorecard examined 535 responses to a survey of multi-site churches that had created worship space in a separate setting. Among the findings:

- By the end of 2013, the average church has grown 14 percent since it went multisite.
- The vast majority (88 percent) report increased fee participation after having multiple locations.
- It is still a relatively new phenomenon: 60 percent had opted for the multisite model in the past five years.
- Almost half (47 percent) have a location in a rural area or a small town.
- One in three (37 percent) started being multisite through a merger of different congregations.<sup>35</sup>

Although megachurches (congregations with 2,000 or more weekly attendees) were pioneers of the multi-site concept, churches with as few as fifty people and as many as 15,000 have tried this approach, said Warren Bird, director of research at Leadership Network; a Dallas-based church think-tank. Multisite is also an international phenomenon: one-third of the congregations on Bird's list of international megachurches are multisite. The report points out some of the challenges of juggling more than one

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<sup>35</sup> Banks, "Multi-Site Church Model."

campus for worship. Researchers found in 2010 that one in ten multi-site churches they surveyed had closed a location. In this new survey, some said rented space in public schools—a popular option for multisite churches—is one of the toughest places to launch an additional site. “I can only guess that the climate of churches renting public facilities is getting more and more difficult with the number of school boards that are declining to rent either on Sundays or to religious groups on the increase,” Bird said. Jim Sheppard, CEO of Generis, an Atlanta-based consulting firm that sponsored the report, warned that it is important to have a “good, sound contract” in whatever location a church picks to set up a temporary worship space. “If your initial location is a public school, do not overestimate the relationship,” he wrote. “People can change, politics can get involved, and you might be forced out sooner than expected.” Multi-site church leaders report that they are finding a greater percentage of “unchurched” people in their new locations than at the original location. “Historically, a church’s greatest impact on the community is in its early years, and so the same thing is happening with a new campus,” Bird said. Both independent congregations and those affiliated with denominations are embracing the multisite concept. Some regional denominational groups, including the United Methodists, consider mergers and other multisite options as part of their revitalization strategies. “One of them is vibrant but needs facilities,” Sheppard said of some merging congregations in a webinar about the report. “The other one fecks vibrancy but has facilities.”<sup>36</sup>

Researchers say multi-site churches, which may share worshipers across town or many miles apart, are growing at a much more rapid pace than traditional megachurches.

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<sup>36</sup> Banks, “Multi-Site Church Model.”

Without the burden of additional expensive buildings, congregations find they grow faster in new places, said Warren Bird, research director of Leadership Network, who recently announced his conclusions. “It’s a combination of both evangelism and saying, ‘People may not come to this particular building. How can we take where we are to where they are?’” he told Religion News Service on August 21. Bird, the author of books on the multisite trend, has tracked the number of churches meeting in more than one place for his Dallas based church think-tank; he combined his findings with Faith Communities Today surveys. Multisite churches have grown from fewer than 200 in 2001 to 1,500 in 2006 to an estimated 3,000 in 2009 to more than 5,000 today. In comparison, the number of megachurches in North America has grown from about fifty in 1970 to about 1,650 in 2012. Multisite churches come in all kinds of models: some congregations speak different languages at different locations; some hear from different “campus pastors” on-site and others are preached to by a senior pastor who speaks live or via video. “The more campuses you have, the more likely you are to use video teaching,” said Bird.<sup>37</sup>

### *Reservations to Multi-site Churches*

In an article written by Andrew Wilson regarding his theological concerns of the multi-site church, Wilson says “one church in many locations” model works itself out. Firstly, Wilson says that in his observation that a number of churches have gone multi-site without sufficient biblical-theological rationale. Given that the vast majority of churches in history have not been multisite, and given that proponents of multiple venues have to defend an unassembled assembly (which is counterintuitive, if not impossible),

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<sup>37</sup> Banks, “Multi-site Churches Are Outpacing Megachurches.”

the burden of proof should be upon us. But in some cases the very idea of having a biblical argument for it has not even been considered (“Driscoll and Keller do it, so it can’t be unbiblical, can it?”), or has been laughed off the table as the anti-growth attitude of theological pedants (“it’s amazing how conservative you theologians are”, as one friend of mine put it). In many other cases, there is a biblical rationale given, but a very dubious one.<sup>38</sup>

The Resurgence, for example, argue that since the church in Corinth sometimes met in homes, it was a multisite church—without pointing out that the gatherings of the “whole church” (1 Cor 14:23; Rom 16:23) are completely without parallel in the modern multisite model, and that this fatally undermines the argument. A fuller defence of multisite, against the criticisms of organizations like Marks, helpfully debunks a number of poor biblical arguments for it (most notably those presented in the book *Multi-Site Church Revolution*), before making the Corinthian argument again, with all the same weaknesses. This is not to say that multisite church is necessarily contrary to scripture. (If I thought it was, I wouldn’t be doing it!) It is just to say that thought is needed before confidently asserting that it is not.<sup>39</sup>

Secondly, the phrase which has become almost a slogan in some quarters, namely “one church, many congregations,” does not seem to me to make very much sense. In the New Testament sense, the congregation and the church are the same, and I presume it is this fact that led to the odd comment I heard at the multisite conference the other day: “these [that is, the gatherings of Christians governed by the same group of elders] are

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<sup>38</sup> Andrew Wilson, “I Still Have Some Concerns About Multisite Church (And I Lead One),” accessed June 10, 2015, <http://thinktheology.co.uk/blog/article/some-concerns-about-multisite>.

<sup>39</sup> Wilson, “I Still Have Some Concerns.”

fully functioning congregations, or, as Mark Driscoll would say, churches.” When comments like this are made by leading experts, it indicates to me a substantial lack of clarity about what exactly a multisite congregation is, biblically speaking—since the very notion of “one church, many congregations” has become the (literally) nonsensical “one church, many churches”—and it also makes me think that large numbers of elders may effectively be governing multiple “churches” without ever being clear that they are. Care is needed here.

Thirdly, and linked to both of the above, Wilson is concerned that in many churches, there has been little or no reflection on the biblical roles of elders, pastors, teachers and overseers. This sounds harsh, but he suspects it stems from the fact that many multi-site pioneers, particularly in the States, operated with a model of church government which was more corporate than biblical before they even went multi-site in the first place. This is understandable, if not defensible; the biblical responsibilities of elders are unlikely to be the priority if the church is growing rapidly, space is needed, and the “elders” are no more than a consultative board of successful businessmen who advise the “pastor.” The result, however, is that it seems slightly old hat in some circles, and a sign of “conservatism,” or even “small church thinking” (may it never be!), to insist that elders and pastors should, between them, know the people they are shepherding, be available to pray for them when they are sick, keep a close eye on their people and their doctrine, live exemplary lives in view of the people, and spend more time on prayer than programming, more time in scripture than in spreadsheets. Size, in the minds of some, legitimizes everything, even the deconstruction of pastoral ministry.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Wilson, “I Still Have Some Concerns.”

Some of these value hierarchies have drifted into the minds of leaders whose ecclesiology, on the face of it, is more robust than that of the multisite experts. (One phrase which made Wilson wince recently was when a leader referred to gifted pastors as struggling with growth because “they like to feel needed,” as if hospital visits and marriage strengthening were primarily activities which indulged the pastor’s desire for affirmation, rather than vital and often heroic gospel ministry. The prophet/priest/king distinction may be at work here too, insinuating as it often does that the pastor’s role is second to that of the strategic leader or preacher, but that’s a post for another day). In fairness, many of these things could also be said of large churches, which are not multisite. But contextual factors—for instance, the fact that multisite churches sometimes have congregations meeting without any elders present, and one church I know has fewer elders than meetings, both of which are unlikely in a single-site model—make the challenges more acute for churches in multiple locations. Again, this is something we have had to consider carefully as we’ve worked out how best to serve the church as an eldership team.<sup>41</sup>

Fourthly, a couple of the practical steps that are increasingly being taken by multisite churches should give us pause. Does not the practice of separating out congregations by ethnicity or language, so the Hispanics worship together at a different time and place to the Africans or the English, undermine the “one new man” vision of the New Testament church? Can you imagine Paul, or James, allowing separate congregations for Jewish and Gentile believers? (Read Galatians if you are not sure where that rhetorical question is going.) To take a more controversial example what about video preaching?

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<sup>41</sup> Wilson, “I Still Have Some Concerns.”



Defenses of this (now widespread) practice frequently respond either to practical objections (“they said people would not like it, but they do”), or to complete straw-men (“they said the Holy Spirit could not speak through video, but he can”), but rarely to more substantial critiques (preaching is more effective when it is embodied, dialogical, accountable, contextualized and charismatic, and all of these things are rendered more difficult, and in some cases impossible, by physical absence).

In theory, the advocates of video tell us that it is just as good as live preaching; but in practice, they invite guest speakers to come to their church and speak live, rather than asking for a DVD, and this seems to me to indicate that they do not really believe that! And the argument for video preaching, which is often that the main guy’s preaching is so much better than everyone else’s that it is better to beam him in than listen to someone local, seems to me to place a greater emphasis on leveraging gifted teachers than on reproducing them. You may disagree on either or both of these examples, of course; many of my friends do. But I would encourage people not to dismiss them without thinking them through. Each should be fully convinced in their own mind.<sup>42</sup>

Why is it that multisite advocates issue forth numerous, detailed and impressive statistics about everything—numerical growth, church participation, monthly giving, satisfaction surveys, church planting—except the number of people who hear and/or respond to the gospel? Theoretically, the rationale for multisite church is fundamentally missional: “We can reach more people with the gospel if we do this.” But is this actually the case? Does a church of two thousand people across seven sites actually see more people baptized in a year than ten equivalent churches of two hundred people each? Is it

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<sup>42</sup> Wilson, “I Still Have Some Concerns.”

the case that multisite churches preach the gospel to more people than they would if the same total number of people planted new churches? It is so often assumed that multi-site enables us to preach the gospel to more people. Clearly, multisite may enable the preacher to proclaim the gospel to more unbelievers each week; but whether it enables the people to is another matter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Do Christians need to think again about the doctrine of the church? Many would answer, 'No!' Mention the church and they begin to smell the musty odor of churchianity. It rises from the crypts of institutional religion, and permeates the seat-cushions of formal traditions. Martin Luther thanked God that even a child of seven knows what the church is. 'Let the church focus on the gospel, preach Christ and him crucified, and the church will become part of the answer instead of the problem'. That is the way Luther's point is often made today.<sup>1</sup>

Others would add that Luther's child of seven has had plenty of help in the last few years. If the teaching of the Bible about the church has been neglected in past centuries, that neglect has certainly been more than remedied. Few cathedrals have been constructed in the last half-century, but theologians have launched a building boom of their own. The publishing skyline is full of books about the church. Not all of those books are theological, to be sure. Some writers assume that we cannot expect scripture to answer the problems of the computer age. The Apostle Paul did not have to face Marxism nor deal with the problems of colonial exploitation and its aftermath. He was not troubled with the internecine warfare of rival denominations and non-denominational agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, "The Biblical Theology of the Church," accessed June 6, 2015, <http://beginningwithmoses.org/oldsite/articles/btchurch1.htm>.

Nor did he have to plant churches in a tribal cultural setting. He worked within his own culture and could ordain as leaders, even in the Gentile churches, men who had been instructed in the scriptures as adherents of the Jewish synagogues. With such considerations the contemporary ecclesiastical pundit eases the Apostle to the Gentiles into his place back in the Hellenistic age. He is then free to display his own grasp of sociometrics, group dynamics, structuralist anthropology, and political hermeneutics.<sup>2</sup>

It would be foolish, of course, to suggest that the behavioral sciences should be set over against biblical understanding. In applying the teaching of God's Word, we must surely understand as fully as we can the circumstances to which it is applied. Yet even in that understanding, we seek to manifest the mind of Christ. Certainly we cannot begin our understanding of the church with sociological analysis. We must begin with the teaching of the Bible, and return to the Bible again and again to deepen and renew our understanding. Theology is reflective; we do understand God's revelation better as the context of our own experience widens and varies our perspective. But the church rests upon the foundation of apostolic teaching. The authoritative words of the inspired witnesses chosen and endued of the Spirit communicate to us the full and final revelation of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:39-42; Heb 2:2-4; Rev 22:18, 19).<sup>3</sup>

To gain the richness of biblical revelation, we do well to trace the unfolding of the theme of the church through the history of God's saving work. In doing so we are instructed by the transformations of that theme as well as by the underlying unity of the purpose and work of God. To focus our consideration, we may reflect on the calling of the church. The church is called to God, called to be his people. By that relationship to

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<sup>2</sup> Clowney, *The Biblical Theology of the Church*.

<sup>3</sup> Clowney, *The Biblical Theology of the Church*.

God, the being of the church is defined. The church is also called, by that very relationship, to a bond of life together. It ministers not only to God, but also to those who make up its company. The church is also called in the midst of the world. Its ministry is therefore threefold: it ministers to God in worship, to the saints in nurture, and to the world in witness. In systematic theology the doctrine of the church is often presented under the rubrics of the Nicene Creed: the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Yet these attributes of the church flow from the more fundamental teaching of the Bible regarding the nature of the church as it is related to the Lord himself. Ecclesiology is part of theology. We gain the clearest light on the issues that the church now faces when we reflect on the calling of the church by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This Trinitarian approach to the doctrine of the church may then be structured in relation to its calling to minister in worship, nurture, and witness.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Church As The People Of God**

Matthew's gospel reports the words of blessing that Jesus spoke to Simon Peter in response to Peter's apostolic confession. Jesus then said, 'And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it' (Mt 16:18). Matthew uses the common term for church in the New Testament, the term *ekklesia*. It was once the habit of critics to question the authenticity of Matthew's report. Jesus spoke of the kingdom, and knew nothing of the church, they said. Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls there has been a belated acceptance of the genuineness of the saying. The scrolls are full of the concept of the community, understood as the congregation of the saints awaiting the coming of the Lord. Further, the thought of the

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<sup>4</sup> Clowney, "The Biblical Theology of the Church."

congregation being established upon the confession of the truth is also prominent in the Dead Sea writings. So is the figure of the rock, and of the building established upon it. The parallels between the language of the Dead Sea sectaries and the words of Jesus do not, however, indicate that Jesus was dependent upon the Essenes. The background to both is the Old Testament.<sup>5</sup>

The concept of the people of God as assembly has its Old Testament roots in the gathering of Israel before the Lord at Mount Sinai. God had demanded of Pharaoh, “Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the desert” (Ex 7:16b). That service was to be a specific gathering for worship (a feast unto me, Ex 5:1). Of course there were further implications of that demand. Pharaoh regarded the Israelites as his slaves, subject to his own divine claims. His lordship was directly challenged by God's claim. The worship, the service of the Lord on the part of Israel, would mark them as his people, his sons (Ex 4:22, 23). It would be a covenant-making ceremony in which the claim of God upon his people and the claim of the people upon God would be ratified in worship.

The term *ekklesia* describes an actual assembly, a gathering of people together. The same is true of the Old Testament term *qahal* that is translated by *ekklesia* in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. The words themselves do not have the restricted meaning of our word, church. Yet, when Jesus said, “I will build my church” (whether he spoke Greek, or used in Aramaic a word that could be so translated), he was not simply saying, “I will bring together a gathering of people.” Rather, he was using a well-known term that described the people of God. The assembly in the desert (Acts 7:38) was the definitive assembly for Israel, the covenant-making assembly when God claimed his

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<sup>5</sup> Clowney, “The Biblical Theology of the Church.”

redeemed people as his own. In Deuteronomy it is spoken of as the day of the assembly (Dt 4:10 LXX; 9:10; 10:4, 18:16).<sup>6</sup>

The key to the meaning of assembly is found in God's command to Moses: "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children" (Dt 4:10). The assembly is a gathering to meet with God. God declares, "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Ex 19:4). God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt is indeed an act of liberation. God strikes off their yoke and enables them to go upright (Lv 26:13). But liberation from slavery in Egypt is not the final purpose of God's saving work. God brings them out that he might bring them in, in to his assembly, to the great company of those who stand before his face. The Lord who assembles the people to himself is the Lord of hosts. His heavenly assembly is composed of the mighty ones (elohim), the holy ones (qedoshim), the sons of God (benei ha'elohim) over whom he reigns as King (Jb 1:6; Ps 82:1; 1 Kgs 22:19; Dn 7:10). When the Lord descends at Sinai, the tens of thousands of the heavenly holy ones are assembled with the congregation that is gathered at his feet (Dt 33:2; Ps 68:17). The earthly assembly, too, is composed of the saints of the Lord (the same term can describe saints or angels). The Dead Sea community had a vivid awareness of this Old Testament panorama. Those who were added to the community became members of God's eternal assembly. They gained a place with the holy angels (1QS 2:25; 11:7-9; IQH 3:21; 11:11, 12).

God's assembly at Sinai is therefore the immediate goal of the exodus. God brings his people into his presence that they might hear his voice and worship him. "I am the

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<sup>6</sup> Clowney, "The Biblical Theology of the Church."

Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me”(Ex 20:2, 3). Standing in the assembly of the Lord, hearing his voice, the people gain their identity from the self-identification of the Lord.

### **The Word in Worship**

We may not lose sight, either, of the importance of God's Word in the assembly of worship. The description of the heavenly assembly in Hebrews 12 comes to a focus in the admonition to hear him who speaks. God spoke from Sinai; the worship of the people responded to the Word of the Lord. In the assemblies of the new covenant, the Word of God is no less central. God is not only present in the midst of his people; He speaks. The ministry of the Word of God in worship partakes of the solemnity of the occasion.

Solemnity does not mean joylessness, for the Word calls to praise. Yet the authority of the Word of the Lord remains central for Christian worship. This is the Word of him who speaks from heaven (Heb 12:25). God spoke in many different ways to the fathers through the prophets, but now he has spoken finally and conclusively through his own Son. It is that word of the Lord that 'was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will' (Heb 2:3, 4).

### **Multi-level Assembling**

Another consequence of the definition of the church as a worshipping assembly is the extreme flexibility that the New Testament shows with respect to its use of the term church. On the one hand, the term is applied to the church universal. This is the church,



which are the people of God and the body of Christ without qualification (Mt 16:18; 1 Pt 2:9; Eph 1:22,23). It is the church as God alone can see it, the whole company of those who have been, are now, or ever will be gathered to God in Christ. Some who perceive this New Testament concept have gone on to deny that any local gathering can be called in a full and proper sense the church. Such a gathering may form a congregation of the church, no doubt, but the church by definition must be the church universal. On the other hand, there are those who isolate what the New Testament teaches about the local church. Paul does speak of the church at Corinth as the church of Christ. In the book of Revelation, Jesus addresses letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor. Congregational theologians have therefore limited the church by definition to the local assembly. Anything beyond the local assembly, they say, should not be spoken of as the church, but as an association of churches.<sup>7</sup>

In the New Testament, the question is further complicated by the fact that local churches are spoken of in more than one sense. At least, local churches come in surprisingly different sizes. The church in Laodicea is a city church, but apparently there was also in Laodicea a house church, meeting in the house of Nymphas (Col 4:15). So, too, Paul can in one breath speak of the churches of Asia and of the church in the house of Aquila and Prisca (1 Cor 16:19). The Westminster Divines noted the house churches that existed along with city churches in the New Testament and argued from this evidence for a Presbyterian system of government. The city church corresponded to the presbytery, and the house church to the local congregation. This line of reasoning recognized smaller and larger gatherings of the church, and further recognized that one could exist within another. The presbytery, however, was a gathering of the ministers and

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<sup>7</sup> Clowney, "The Biblical Theology of the Church."

elders, not of the whole membership of the city church. Another difference emerged from the development of congregational structure in the cities. Village churches were swallowed up in growing metropolitan areas. They became parish churches—gatherings of a size that was larger than the house church, surely, but perhaps smaller than some of the city churches of the New Testament.<sup>8</sup>

We may ask, however, if the full flexibility of the New Testament view of the church is adequately recognized today. Because the heavenly assembly for worship defines the church, there is no one size of assembly on earth that is ideal or normative. Those who call upon the name of the Lord together may do so in larger or smaller assemblies. Such recognition does not mean that smaller assemblies may be disorderly, or that assemblies at any level exist apart from the exercise of gifts of teaching, ruling, and diaconal service. But it does suggest the possibility of fuller expressions of the worshipping assembly in large city gatherings, as well as the recognition of the important place of the house church, not as a rival form of organization, but as an expression, in a more immediate setting, of the fellowship of those who call upon the name of the Lord in one particular place.

### **The Theology of Church Growth**

Kent Hunter is a prolific author, speaker, and advocate for the Church Growth Movement, especially among Lutherans. His most recent book, *Confessions of a Church Growth Enthusiast: An Evangelical, Confessional Lutheran Takes a Hard Look at the Church Growth Movement*, is an apology for the Church Growth Movement in the face of the many criticisms the movement has received of late. It purports to expose these

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<sup>8</sup> Clowney, “The Biblical Theology of the Church.”

criticisms as biased, uninformed, morally and ethically fraudulent," and ridiculous (Hunter wants to show that the theology of the Lutheran Confessions is not only compatible with church-growth methodology, but also that true Lutheran confessionalism actually promotes the Church Growth Movement). So he uses Martin Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, C. F. W. Walther, and Francis Pieper, among others, to promote his view of missiology. The idea is worthy. It would be nice for both church-growth advocates and confessional Lutherans if they could find common theological ground.<sup>9</sup>

Advocacy of church-growth, or attempts to defend the movement from a Lutheran perspective, are nothing new. Hunter's defense is noteworthy on two accounts. First, *Confessions* presents the clear and consistent theology of the Church Growth Movement. For this we owe Hunter a debt of thanks. Rarely has the theology of the movement been so clearly presented by one of its advocates. Second, Hunter's theology is not merely his own. Twenty-seven pastors and administrators within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod endorse the book. Hunter's theology is the theology of the entire Church Growth Movement within the Lutheran churches today. His theology is a major force within Lutheranism. This theology requires deep and critical analysis, and it requires vigilant response. Rather than dressing the Church Growth Movement in Lutheran apparel, Hunter presents a theology that is thoroughly un-Lutheran. It is a theology that begins with a two-tiered understanding of the church and then invades every article of faith with this ecclesiology.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Klemet Preus, "An Evaluation of Kent Hunter's Confessions," Sermons and Papers, accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.confessionallutherans.org/papers/klemet.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Preus, "An Evaluation of Kent Hunter's Confessions."

### Understanding Church Growth

McGavran firmly believes that by a studied, scientific approach to growth methods there is no reason why the world's need for "fantastically multiplying churches" cannot be met. His primary concern is for the millions who have not heard the gospel. With a passionate emphasis upon soul-saving McGavran has taken sharp issue with the humanistic tendencies and the social-gospel approach of the Commission of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches. McGavran's appeals to reach out to the unchurched millions have certainly had their influence on the resurgent movements toward church planting among the evangelicals, as witnessed by the Wheaton Declaration of the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association in 1966, the Berlin Congress on Evangelism in the same year, and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in 1974.<sup>11</sup>

Other significant efforts toward church growth among the evangelicals have been the Evangelism Crusades associated with Billy Graham and the Saturation Evangelism Programs carried out in Latin America as the "Evangelism-in-Depth" crusade under the direction of Dr. Kenneth Strachan. The latter effort involved "the total mobilization of all church members" and had as its goal "to reach every family in a given country with an oral or written presentation of the gospel." Other research institutions are Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center (MARC), located in Monrovia, California and headed by Edward R. Dayton, and the ULSL Center for World Mission, established in 1976 at Pasadena, California under the leadership of Ralph D. Winter. These agencies "offer information systems and computer technology for developing

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<sup>11</sup> Ernst H. Wendland, "Church Growth Theology," *Wise Essays*, accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.wlssays.net/files/WendlandGrowth.pdf>.

information on world Christianity and “coordinate studies and strategies for reaching unreached people with the gospel.” These are some of the leading U.S. efforts in the field of church growth in a worldwide context, indicating that the whole matter has been developing into a science among the evangelicals. According to this science, church growth is to be thoroughly studied according to all the modern techniques available and aggressively pursued and strategically promoted in order to confront the non-Christian world with the challenge of the gospel of Christ. This is in sharp contrast to the leading spirit prevailing in the World Council of Churches, which tends more toward promoting “dialogue” with other world religions in an effort to find common ground with “God’s self-revelation through history” and in fostering ideas of socialism and humanism which at times bears a strong resemblance to Marxism. Needless to say, the proponents of this kind of theology have little use for church growth principles as promoted by the evangelicals.<sup>12</sup>

Since church growth theology came into prominence largely through the efforts of one man, Dr. Donald McGavran, and since he is still today its leading exponent, one must look to his writings in order to get an idea of what church growth principles are all about. While McGavran originally developed his ideas in a book entitled *The Bridges of God*, published in 1955, he has refined his basic thoughts in later writings, the most comprehensive of which is his book entitled *Understanding Church Growth*, published in 1970. It is from this later work that we have outlined a resume of his chief theories, using as many of his own terms and expressions as possible:

- Church growth is primarily faithfulness to God, who commands us to find the lost. Quantitative expansion is the top priority item of “church business.”

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<sup>12</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

However successful and valuable educational activities and social programs may be, they are of secondary importance in world mission work. God wants his sheep found. Our chief purpose is to find. The multiplication of churches nourished on the Bible is a sine qua non in carrying out the purposes of God.

- Mission (in a narrow sense) is an enterprise devoted to proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and to persuading men to become his disciples. Some churches wish to do mission work by means of “search theology,” proclaiming the Word everywhere by word and deed, without regard for results. This, however, is not what God wants. The Lord wants his followers to have a “harvest theology.” The number of found people are important to him. We must search, find, persuade, and harvest!
- In 1964 there were 42,000 Protestant missionaries serving the cause of missions. But there was little growth in world mission fields. Too little attention was given to growth results. Too much energy was spent in social activity, denominationalism, and faulty approaches to evangelism.
- We must wake up to the fact that the church grows most effectively through “people movements.” Mission agencies should be careful in noting existing patterns of social relationships, choosing to work among people who can be classified as “homogeneous units.” Such a unit can take various forms: as a tribe in Africa, a middle-class group in Japan, a caste in India. Mission strategists will be ever on the alert for such units which give promise of being “winnable people.” this is in keeping with Christ’s command in Matthew 28:19, where he instructs Christians to “disciple all nations.”
- In order to achieve maximum success we should concentrate upon people as “homogeneous units” by a process of “multi-individual conversion.” Winning groups rather than individuals is how two-thirds of all converts in “Africasia” and “Oceania” have been won!
- For effective work we must aim for measurable growth. A numerical approach is essential, since the church is made up of countable people. Such an approach requires a careful study of all the circumstances involved: membership statistics; results of other churches working in a given area; manner of growth over a period of years (whether by birth, transfer, or conversion); causes of growth (radio, literature, revival, political climate, use of national workers, etc.). Study with graphs in hand!
- We hinder an understanding of church growth by confusing “perfecting” with “disciplining.” The Great Commission makes a distinction here. First disciple by an initial thrust, aimed to achieve rapid quantitative growth. Then perfect, that is, nurture in the faith to achieve qualitative growth. While both areas are important for the growth of the church, each requires its own kind of strategy in order to achieve maximum results. All too often too much effort has been

expended in concentrating on the few who have been won rather than on the many who still need to be won.

- We should use the hundreds of different mission undertakings as a vast laboratory, to see which factors play a part in growth or a lack of it. A thorough knowledge of social conditions, geography, political inclinations, language peculiarities etc... helps to ascertain where we can expect to work with success. We should occupy fields of low receptivity “lightly” as far as expending mission effort is concerned!<sup>13</sup>

One does not get too far into McGavran’s writings without coming to an uneasy feeling that one is dealing with a super salesman who in his enthusiasm is becoming guilty of overselling his product. One is left with the impression that the name of the game is numbers. Success is what counts. Even Scripture, presumed to be sacred, is being bent to fit the argument of “growth at all costs.” This is unfortunate, since much of what McGavran has to say needs to be said. Overselling a product, however, adds force to the arguments of those who stand for something less. Liberals within the WCC mentioned above dismiss McGavran as a fundamentalist throwback, whose simplistic pronouncements cannot be taken seriously. Those who often show little regard for scripture’s clearly intended meaning with some justification accuse McGavran of “using” scripture rather than “interpreting it properly.” Although McGavran’s church growth movement has attained great popularity in evangelical circles throughout the world, there have been those even among the evangelicals who have seriously questioned some of its principles. At a Missionary Study Fellowship convened by the Institute of Mennonite Studies in February 1973, a number of critical observations were expressed and published. It was pointed out that church leaders from a number of Third World countries

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<sup>13</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

have reacted negatively to McGavran's strongly pragmatic methods as "a projection of the American ego and style."<sup>14</sup>

John H. Yoder, president of Goshen Biblical Seminary, also comments on the Third World's negative reaction to McGavran's success orientation and computerization, suggesting that church growth people assume you can make Christians the way you make cars and sausages." More significantly, Yoder questions McGavran's theological terminology, especially his distinction between discipling and perfecting people in the evangelizing process. By referring to discipling as a matter of gaining a minimal commitment to Christianity and perfecting" as the continuing process of education which follows, Yoder suggests that McGavran is encouraging a sort of "two-level membership," which to Yoder is "an anomalous situation." Moreover, Yoder maintains, McGavran's people movement ideas encourage this superficial kind of believer who becomes more or less "psychologically vaccinated" rather than becoming a committed Christian. Yoder raises another point. McGavran's system seems to favor the missionary as a professional agent, deployed to plant churches wherever success can best be achieved. If this is not achieved, it follows that the agent is simply moved elsewhere. But what happens to those who have been brought to faith in places where the project has not been successful? The New Testament contains success stories. But there are also places recorded in James, Peter, and Revelation where we are told of people consisting of scattered little groups who are called upon to face the hostility of the world without losing hope. Success or a

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<sup>14</sup> Wendland, "Church Growth Theology."



lack of it, Yoder points out, is not recorded as self-conscious strategy making on the basis of concern for growth.<sup>15</sup>

### **Theological Defense of Multi-site**

Because multi-site churches are a relatively new phenomenon, a significant literature has not yet built up around the topic. Therefore, let me begin with some introductory comments. The operative definition of a multi-site church comes from *The Multi-Site Church Revolution*:

A multi-site church is one church meeting in multiple locations—different rooms on the same campus, different locations in the same region, or in some instances, different cities, states, or nations. A multi-site church shares a common vision, budget, leadership, and board.<sup>16</sup>

As this definition indicates, this phenomenon is composed of several varieties of multi-site churches: For some churches, having multiple sites involves only a worship service at each location; for others, each location has a full range of support ministries. Some churches use video-cast sermons (recorded or live); others have in-person teaching on-site. Some churches maintain a similar worship atmosphere and style at all their campuses, and others allow or invite variation.” Though not an exhaustive list, the following, overlapping models are common among multi-site churches.

### **Video-Venue Model**

With the video-venue model, a church employs videocast sermons (live or recorded) at multiple sites on the same campus, each of which offers distinct worship

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<sup>15</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

<sup>16</sup> Gregg R. Allison, “Theological Defense of Multisite,” *9 Marks*, accessed June 5 2015, <http://9marks.org/article/theological-defense-multi-site/>.

services. These services may be differentiated by language, music style, or other factors.

In 2007, 38 percent of multi-site churches used this approach.

### **Regional-Campus Model**

With the regional-campus model, a church has multiple campuses in a region—like Seattle—each of which replicates the experience of the originating campus. This model is often adopted because of spatial constraints at the originating campus and/or because of the church's missional commitment to extending the gospel and its ministries to other communities in the geographical area. This model may be combined with the first model, such that the sermons are videocast from the originating campus; or it can be combined with the third model, such that members of the teaching team preach the sermons.

### **Teaching-Team Model**

With the teaching-team model, a church has a strong teaching team that is responsible for preaching at the multiple sites on the same campus or at other campuses. This model does not employ videocast sermons.

### **Total Number of Multi-site Churches**

Though current statistics are hard to obtain, the best estimates place the number of multi-site churches at somewhere in the several thousand range, with predictions that in the next few years, that number could reach a staggering thirty thousand churches. Now

that the multi-site church phenomenon has been briefly introduced, I will offer my assessment of it according to the four-fold grid.

### **Biblical Assessment**

As one might expect, some multi-site proponents misuse Scripture to support the multi-site phenomenon. Some examples include:

- *Exodus 18:21-23*. Moses delegates some of his judging responsibilities to others: “You might say that Moses created the first multi-site church.” Then again, you might not say it!
- *Matthew 11:4-5*. Jesus responds to John the Baptist’s question of whether he was the Christ by emphasizing the good things that are heard and seen. Thus, say the advocates, multi-site churches are warranted by the good things they produce. But just because something “works” doesn’t mean it’s biblically warranted or legitimate.
- *Acts 15*. Proponents maintain that the Antioch church was not seen as a separate body but as an extension of the Jerusalem church; it even functioned under the authority of Peter and the apostles in Jerusalem. Accordingly, Barnabas became the first campus pastor when he was sent to Antioch to lead the new congregation. Moreover, the many new congregations that formed throughout Asia Minor and Europe were all connected to the church of Jerusalem (MSCR 91-92). The basic problem with this argument is that while the first churches did sustain a connection to the Jerusalem Church, they were individual churches with their own leaders, not campuses of the Jerusalem Church.
- *1 Corinthians 9:22*. Paul says that he becomes all things to all people so that by all possible ways he could save some. In keeping with this principle, multi-site proponents claim that their churches have the potential of extending the gospel in dramatic new fashion, which is what Paul’s life and model expressed (MSCR 29, 199). But the argument doesn’t compare like with like. There’s a difference between personal adaption (becoming as a Jew for the Jews) and church adaptation (for example, becoming as an artistic community for the artists). The latter requires a church to adopt a homogeneity principle and thereby abandon the biblical idea that the local church is where social (barbarian, slave, free) and ethnic (Jew, Gentile) divisions dissolve.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

Although scripture gives explicit requirements for church leaders (e.g. 1Tm 3:1-7), the “top five campus-pastor qualities” listed for developing multi-site churches are the following:

- A leader who completely buys into the church’s vision and is loyal to its senior leadership
- A team player with strong relational skills
- A team builder who can reproduce vision in others
- A pastor, someone with a desire and heart to shepherd groups and individuals
- A flexible entrepreneur

Substituting biblical qualifications for requirements such as these denies the sufficiency of scripture and establishes a kind of leadership that fails to reflect biblical standards.<sup>18</sup>

### **A Better Biblical Case for Multi-Site Churches**

A better case can be made for multi-site churches from biblical data. Certainly, the New Testament emphasis is on the church assembling together. It’s mentioned three times in 1 Corinthians 11:17-20:

But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because *when you come together* it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, *when you come together as a church*, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. *When you come together*, it is not the Lord’s Supper that you eat.

At the same time, the New Testament indicates that the early Christians met together regularly both in large gatherings and in the homes of the more well-to-do members: “And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their

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<sup>18</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts” (Acts 2:46). Even in the example cited above from Corinth, the house-churches in that city would come together as the church of Corinth to celebrate the Lord’s Supper (cf. Rom 16:5). These examples may underscore what would have been normative for the early church, as the many multi-site house churches were considered to be part of one citywide church. These smaller congregations met regularly in homes (i.e., campuses) as well as all together as a church (i.e., the originating campus).<sup>19</sup>

### **Theological Assessment**

Theological warrant for multi-site churches is often anemic. Some examples of poor theological support or theological framework include the following:

- Some claim that the multi-site phenomenon is “a God thing.” This claim is linked to results: “Our logic was simple: obviously the way we were already doing church was the right way, all you had to do was look at how God had blessed our church.” Of course, all this boils down to the claim that God must be favorably supporting everything in this world that works. Perhaps we’re to overlook the prosperity of the wicked?
- MSCR argues that a multi-site church is one that develops “worship communities in multiple locations.” Assuming for the sake of argument that this is fine, there are many other factors we need to consider in developing and executing a “church.” But other than nursery, children’s and student programming, and small group ministry (sometimes also missions), these other elements do not receive much attention. Indeed, some churches intentionally do not develop these other elements. This circumscribed ecclesiology raises an important issue: how do multi-site churches such as these engage in evangelism outside of the church, biblical and theological instruction, women’s and men’s ministries, seniors programming, prayer, counseling, member care, bereavement care, personal mentoring, church discipline, providing material help for those in need, and community care for those within the sphere of the church?

These considerations become particularly important when proponents claim, “Multi-site could eventually change the location people picture when they answer the question,

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<sup>19</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

‘What is a church?’” This claim is offered without any theological consideration of whether the question “What is a church?” has a right or wrong answer and what scripture affirms as the answer.

### **Better Theological Arguments for Multi-Site Churches**

A better theological justification can be offered for multi-site churches. Specifically, theological arguments that may better support the multi-site model include the following:

*Unity.* The New Testament emphasis on love, unity, cooperation, and interdependence certainly addresses the sanctified reality that should characterize churches individually. Should these virtues be extended beyond the local church level to address the sanctified reality that should characterize churches together in a particular locale. Examples such as the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) and the raising of money from the churches of Macedonia for the relief of the Jerusalem church (2 Cor 8-9) developed on the basis of such love, unity, cooperation, and interdependence.

When we come to multi-site churches, then, are we that far removed from this theological ground? This notion appears among proponents of the multi-site approach. For example, Richard Kaufmann of Harbor Presbyterian Church says, “I think the whole concept of cooperating as churches is a significant theological point in order to demonstrate the unity of the Christian body.” Drew Goodmanson of Kaleo Church in San Diego likewise says, “with multi-site strategies you give the city witness to kingdom expression as seen in the unity of multiple sites working together.” This theological emphasis on unity is often cited as a key reason for preferring multiplying campuses

rather than multiplying church plants: when a new church is spun off, the mother church and the daughter church quickly move away from each other and stop cooperating.

*Pastoral Care.* A theological concern often raised in opposition to multi-site churches is the issue of pastoral care: how can multi-site churches provide the pastoral care that is envisioned in scripture and demanded by churches that take the responsibility to disciple their members seriously? The response from responsible multi-site churches is that the pastoral team at each campus/site is responsible to provide the full range of pastoral care for its campus/site. At the same time, different campuses will share resources with one another. Sharing resources is part of the strong connectionalism envisioned by multi-site churches.

*Responsible Church Growth.* Finally, the multi-site church structure can aid responsible church growth. Here the issue is not merely numeric growth for the sake of numbers, church prestige, or pastoral notoriety. Rather, what must be considered is growth that comes from God and how a church is to embrace such growth and adapt itself to accommodate it. As for biblical input about growth, the Gospels underscore “the public ministry of Jesus to large crowds” (Mt 14:14, 21; 15:38; Mk 4:1, 6:34; Lk 12:1). Next, the book of Acts “records the amazing growth of the church both in Jerusalem and in Antioch” (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:711:21, 24-26). Furthermore, the New Testament emphasizes that “the gospel is good news to be spread in all places” (2 Thes 3:1; Acts 9:31; Mt 29:18-20; Acts 1:8; Lk 14:21-22).<sup>20</sup>

While growth at Bethlehem creates very real pastoral care and ministry responsibilities, we ought not begrudge the Lord’s grace upon us. We have not always grown and probably will not always grow. Let us be thankful to God for the growth He is

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<sup>20</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

presently giving. Surely we can agree that the spreading of the gospel is good. And that large numbers coming to hear the clear preaching of the word is good. And that a growing number of people meeting God in worship is good. Granted the large numbers at Bethlehem demand responsible discipleship and task the elders with a big shepherding task. But we believe this growth we are being granted is good. God is sovereign over our growth. Our responsibility as elders is to responsibly shepherd and manage the growth the Lord gives. The multi-church structure is a way of managing responsible church growth.<sup>21</sup>

### **Missional Assessment of Multi-Site Churches**

Much attention has been placed in recent discussions of ecclesiology on the church as *missional*, or its identification as the body of divinely called and divinely-sent ministers to proclaim the gospel and advance the kingdom of God (Jn 20:19-23). Jurgen Moltmann emphasized the importance of understanding “not that the church has a mission, but the very reverse: that the mission of Christ creates its own church. Mission does not come from the church; it is from mission and in light of mission that the church has to be understood.” Accordingly, George Hunsberger underscored the focus and necessity of “a missional ecclesiology—an ecclesiology that sees the fundamental missionary character of the church as critical for its self-understanding in a post-Christian, postmodern setting.” This contrasts with missions being seen more as an activity of the

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<sup>21</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”



church rather than in terms of the church's essential image of itself. *Missional* is a matter of identity first, then function.<sup>22</sup>

A missional ecclesiology stresses that the church's *very existence* has been sent into the world. . . . The fundamental point is that mission is not peripheral or additional for the church. The fact that it has been sent is of its essential nature, so much so that the sending is implicitly and explicitly formative in all aspects of its life—its worship, its *koinonia*, its engagements, its witness, its birthing of new communities, its sociopolitical engagements, its compassion and mercy. Moreover, *missional* is a matter of corporate identity first, then individual engagement.

Proponents of multi-site churches make much of the missional nature of the church and appeal to it as a justification for their approach. Some of these appeals are less than convincing. For instance, some claim, “multi-site churches are more evangelistic than those with one site,” which leads them to conjecture “multi-site may be the only vehicle big enough to complete the Great Commission”? Though empirical data is unavailable, it is probably the case that some multi-site churches are more evangelistic than some churches with one site, and some churches with one site are more evangelistic than some multi-site churches. Furthermore, one would hazard a guess that many vehicles will complete the Great Commission.<sup>23</sup>

The multi-site model is envisioned as the latest attempt (following seeker-driven churches, purpose-driven churches, and postmodern churches) to give a contextualized “response to the skyrocketing number of unchurched Americans and the constant need to apply a biblical worldview to current contexts.” The missional nature of the church

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<sup>22</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

<sup>23</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology,”

demands that it engage in contextualization. At the same time, it should be admitted that some contextualization efforts turn out to engage in over contextualization, thereby significantly weakening or even destroying the church through syncretism. Accordingly, it is just not enough to claim to be contextualized. Multi-site churches, like all other churches, must engage in responsible, appropriate contextualization.<sup>24</sup>

The claim is made that multi-site churches are most focused on the mission: “Imagine the power of a church not built around a personality or a facility but instead built around a mission.” Yet multi-site churches are probably as susceptible to “the cult of personality” as one-site churches (whether those churches are large or small).

### **Why Multi-Site Churches Really Are Missional**

Missional discussions that may better support the multi-site model include the following:

*Reaching the City.* Multi-site churches for city reaching may grasp the missional identity of the church better than other churches, because they are designed with the specific missional purpose to reach the city with the gospel as a community. This is often done with sites targeting specific areas or groups within the city. In a sense, multi-site missionality reverses the trend of taking people out of their missional/relational networks in order to attend the church; it instead establishes campuses at multiple sites so as to affect all the neighborhoods in the city. One might say the multi-site church is more locally minded, because it’s not forcing everyone in a church into one centralized location.

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<sup>24</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

*Growth Is a Blessing, not a Curse.* Missionally, growth that is from God is a blessing, not a curse. And a church that is experiencing God-given growth must expand and restructure so as to accommodate this growth and minister effectively to each person coming to Christ and incorporate them into its missional community. For example, Bethlehem Baptist Church has opted “to create and nurture a radical, risk-taking mindset for ‘spreading’ by multiplication as opposed to the more comfortable mindset of expansion by centralized enlargement.” Accordingly, its “Treasuring Christ Together” vision encompasses multiplying “churches and campuses” and works from this principle: If a band of radical disciples of Jesus are able to keep a pilgrim mindset and believe in an expanding vision of the local church, multiplying campuses is a feasible and affordable way to do it under the united banner of spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup>

*Why Not Just Plant Churches?* People commonly ask multi-site churches why they do not just engage in traditional church planting. Though empirical data is not forthcoming, a number of multi-site exercise a dual pronged expansion strategy: plant churches and multiply campuses. Another example of this is Mars Hill in Seattle, which initially tried to manage its staggering growth with church planting through the Acts 29 Network, even being “honored as the second most prolific church planting church in America.”<sup>26</sup>

But church planting is especially difficult for several types of churches:

- Churches in which many new people are coming to faith in Christ, since it’s not possible to send them away to another—even daughter—church.

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<sup>25</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

<sup>26</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

- Churches in which the church planters have targeted areas far beyond the reach of the mother church, because the presence of these daughter churches cannot relieve the pressure of the growth of the mother church.
- Churches whose plants are still relatively immature and incapable of attracting and/or handling growth from the mother church.

Other factors influencing some churches to move toward multi-sites rather than doing church planting included the following:

- Traditional church planting efforts are generally thirty percent more costly than multi-site growing.
- The multi-site approach generates more opportunities for people to serve at the various sites.
- This approach encourages each campus to be faithfully contextualized in one particular place, then expand specifically in other neighborhoods. This missional emphasis is often accompanied by a warning against homogenized churches with generic DNA. Much to be preferred are homogenized churches with specific DNA—targeting a specific culture—or diversified churches (multicultural churches).<sup>27</sup>

In 2007, 12% of multi-site churches spun off sites to become independent churches.

In actuality, then, this approach may contribute to church planting in the long run.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

<sup>28</sup> Wendland, “Church Growth Theology.”

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

A multisite church is one church that meets at multiple locations. Churches began to use the multisite church model in the mid-1980s.

#### **Starting a Multisite Church**

According to the Leadership Network/Generis Multisite Church Scorecard, multisite churches affect over five million people every week, about the same number of people that make up metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia. Obviously, this is no passing ecclesiastical fad. But perhaps one of the most burning questions when it comes to multisite churches is, "How do they start?" Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Do large churches plant new campus and become multisite, or do small churches plant more campuses and, thus, attract a greater number of people? The Leadership Network/Generis report says that the likelihood of a church being a multisite church increases with its size. Our survey confirms that the larger the church, the more likely to be multisite and the more campuses and services it has. The report goes on to say: 85% of multi-sites in our survey are growing—as measured from the year they became multisite to the present. This is a very significant number because the typical U.S. Protestant church is not growing. In any given year, various denominations report that roughly four out of five of their churches are plateaued or in decline, while only one in five are growing. Among

multi-sites, the larger the church's overall attendance, the more likely the church will be growing.<sup>1</sup>

Multi-sites grow at an impressive 14% per year. While many churches were growing when they became multisite—and growth was a trigger for many to become multisite—the average growth rate from the year a church went multisite through 2013 is an impressive 14% per year. That growth rate does not change by overall size of church. A common question that arises for churches that are considering the idea of becoming a multisite congregation is this: "How many people need to make up the core group at the new site?" Generally speaking, the Leadership Network/Generis document reports, this number ranges anywhere from two to 25% of the sending church's overall attendance, and that there is an inverse relationship between the percentage necessary and the size of the congregation. A multitude of other questions could be asked as it relates to the initiation of a multisite church, but once the new location is established, one of the most pressing concerns is how to staff the new site.<sup>2</sup>

### **Staffing a Multisite Church**

Church staffing can be difficult, even with only one location. Not everybody was made to minister to middle school girls or rascally third grade boys, and it can be hard to fill a number of positions within the local church, especially for small churches in more rural areas where not as many volunteers or eligible pastors are available. Even more so, when beginning a new site of an existing congregation, staffing the new location can be a

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<sup>1</sup> Ed Stetzer, "Starting, Staffing, and Supporting a Multisite Church," Christianity Today, accessed June 14, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/march/starting-staffing-and-supporting-multisite-church.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Stetzer, "Starting, Staffing, and Supporting."

stressor. What position is more important? How do we convince people to volunteer? Regarding the matter of layperson involvement, the Leadership Network/Generis Multisite Scorecard reports: 88% of churches report that going multisite increased the role of lay participation. Even more significant, only 1% said it decreased. The rest (11%) said it remains the same. These numbers affirm the idea that that the launching of new locations fosters an increase in the congregation stepping up in more widespread participation. The responses provide solid evidence to those who wonder, “Will going multisite increase or decrease the role of lay participation?”<sup>3</sup>

The research presented in the Leadership Network/Generis report seems to show that layperson involvement shows a widespread increase and almost no decrease. This is important, but understandable as joining a church location on the ground floor may produce a greater attitude of ownership in the average member than if the average member were to simply join a pre-existing gathering. One of the most important questions a sending church must ask when starting a new congregation is, “Who do I hire first? What role is most important to fill at a new site?” The Leadership Network/Generis report says: Campus pastors serve as the “face with the place.” Almost all campuses have a staff person who is focused on that particular campus, making sure the people there are pastored, discipled, and trained. This person goes by many different names: campus pastor is the most common, but other titles are campus director, site pastor, and sometimes simply pastor.<sup>4</sup>

According to Leadership Network's survey, 82% of multisite campuses have such a pastor (whether paid or volunteer) who devotes at least 3/4 time to that location. The

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<sup>3</sup> Stetzer, “Starting, Staffing, and Supporting.”

<sup>4</sup> Stetzer, “Starting, Staffing, and Supporting.”

percentage increases with the overall size of the church: so for those with 5,000 or more in total attendance, 92% have a campus pastor of 3/4 time or more, and for those less than 1,000 in attendance, 76% had a campus pastor of 3/4 time or more. A campus pastor may be the most important role to be filled at a new church site, but what do the stats say about the roles that are filled? The report goes on: We asked, “What paid roles were essential to be in place before you launched?” The top three options were campus pastor (91%), worship leader (62%) and children's leader (46%), as. The likelihood of hiring a campus pastor moves to almost 100% when overall attendance is 2,000 and higher.

What other roles are likely to be hired? The ranking follows the three listed above: administrative assistant to the campus pastor—and perhaps to others (28%), technical/production director (19%), youth leader (17%), musicians (11%), person assigned to logistics and/or connections between campuses (10%), operations director if a different person from above (8%), small group leader (6%), hospitality coordinator (6%), and outreach/missions leader (2%).<sup>5</sup>

### **Supporting a Multisite Church**

Finally, the question must be asked, “How much money is this going to take?” Very few churches have the money for a second, third, or fourth campus just sitting around in the church offering plates, so it is imperative for a sending church to wisely consider how it might support a new site for its congregation. Costs vary according to where the church meets. We asked churches to describe their newest campus based on three options: 52% said “we're strictly renters (school, theater, etc.),” 34% said “we've bought or constructed something, including a church merger,” and 14% said “we're

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<sup>5</sup> Stetzer, “Starting, Staffing, and Supporting.”



leasing something we can modify (leased commercial building, etc.).” We then asked the start-up costs for the entire first year of a church's newest campus based on five categories. As an overall average (using medians), 48% goes to staffing costs (salaries, benefits), 28% to equipment including technology, 17% to facility purchase or rental, 4% to central services and 3% to marketing/advertising. In dollar amounts, the median total cost of launching a new campus is \$145,000.<sup>6</sup>

So much more could be said about starting, staffing, and supporting a multisite church. Just as is the case with single-site churches, multisite churches are complicated organisms that require the bright minds of gifted individuals and the wise counsel of the Holy Spirit.

### **Problems of the Multisite Church**

Below are twenty-two misgivings about the multi-site model. All of these apply to churches that use a video preacher. Over half apply to churches who employ a preacher on every campus.

1. There's no clear example of a multi-site church in the New Testament, only supposition. “Well, surely, the Christians in a city could not have *all* met...” (but see Acts 2:46; 5:12; 6:2).
2. If a church is constituted by the preaching of the Word and the distribution of the ordinances under the binding authority of the keys, every “campus” where those activities transpire is actually a church. “Multi-site church” is a misnomer. It's a collection of churches under one administration.
3. For every additional multi-site campus out there, there's one less preaching pastor being raised up for the next generation.

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<sup>6</sup> Stetzer, “Starting, Staffing, and Supporting.”

4. What effectively unites the churches (campuses) of a multi-site church are a budget, a pastor's charisma, and brand identity. Nowhere does the Bible speak of building church unity in budgets, charisma, and brand.
5. To say that the unity of the church (i.e. the unity of the campuses) depends on the leaders is to say that the life and work of the church depends that much more on the leaders. Members, in comparison to a single-site model, are demoted.
6. To the extent that a multi-site church relies on brand identity to reach unbelievers, to that same extent they are building Christianity on their brand identity.
7. Multi-site churches which use video preaching unwittingly communicate that singing is more significant for Christian growth and closer to the heart of worship than hearing God's preached Word. After all, how many multi-site churches stream their music over video from a central location? A church wouldn't *dare* import the music, it's thought. People need to engage with a live band. People need their music authentic, personal, enfleshed. But preaching? Apparently, it can be imported from afar.
8. When a multi-site pastor implodes, dies, or retires, all the churches that constitute that "church" are put at risk, including all the smaller once-independent congregations that the multi-site franchise took over.
9. A multi-site church formally removes the concept of "assembly" from the definition of "church" since it's a "church" that never actually assembles (but see 1 Cor. 11:18). This is what it means to be *multi-site*. As such, members of a multi-site church never need to gather in order to be a church. One might say they *should* gather for reasons of prudence. But it's not a formal requirement of being a "church." A multi-site church could spread its ninety-seven members (for example) across two sites or ninety-seven sites.
10. Wise and sensible pastors of multi-site churches will not follow the logic of a *multi-site* model to its rational conclusion, but will continue to insist on some gathering for reasons of prudence and even biblical obedience (though doing so contradicts their formal definition of "church"). Unwise pastors and members, however, *will* follow the multi-site logic to this conclusion by creating the opportunity for "Internet churches," unchurched "fellowship," and other forms of churchless Christianity.
11. A multi-site church separates authority from the people with whom you gather. Authority and relationships are pulled apart. So a multi-site church involves exercising oversight and discipline over people with whom you never gather.

12. A multi-site church makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a congregation to fulfill its obligation to exercise the keys over the whole “church.”
13. Insofar as the main teacher belongs to a different gathering, a multi-site church separates the ministry of the word from the ministry of deeds.
14. Not only does a multi-site pastor possess all the administrative power that a bishop possesses over churches in his region, he possesses even more power than a bishop because he’s doing all the preaching in all those churches.
15. The multi-site church model depends upon extending the reach of “my” church rather than partnering with and aiding other congregations. That is, it’s built on a competitive model of franchise extension, rather than a partnering model of mutual aid that we see in the New Testament. All this can foment “turfyness” and competition between churches. At the very least, every additional campus is a missed opportunity for helping another ministry.
16. The pastor of a large church has difficulty knowing all his members, but he can at least have some sense of the room in which he’s preaching. Both of these are impossible by definition in a multi-site church that employs video preaching.
17. Multi-site churches make it easier to be an anonymous Christian/church member, and perhaps easier for wolves to hide. Yes, this is true of larger churches also, but now the anonymity is built into the very structures. A person can bounce between campuses—church hop!—all in the same “church.”
18. Multi-site churches make church discipline at best more difficult and at worst impossible, as an excommunicated member could easily just switch “campuses” without anyone noticing.
19. Multi-site pours gas on the fire of “theotainment,” as members receive the Word of God from a disembodied man on a screen.
20. In an age, which wants authenticity and reality, multi-site, is ironically anti-incarnational: it divides Word from flesh.
21. If every local church is to be a presentation, or expression or picture of the universal church, that unbelievably wonderful end-time assembly of all God’s people, the multi-site church pictures a divided end-time assembly.
22. Multi-site churches are the current trend in evangelicalism. The great question is, will they be able to make a generational transition? Will they be able to hold together when the main preaching pastor—who is usually in himself the center of gravity for the whole enterprise—goes off the scene? And how much

institutional and spiritual fall-out will occur when he does? The only examples of “multi-site churches” that have survived trans-generationally are those which invest a particular office with theological significance, as in, “The man who holds this office is the Successor of Peter, the Vicar of Christ on Earth, the Supreme Pontiff of the Church, and you owe him your allegiance regardless of whether or not you like his preaching.” Whether our own evangelical brand of “multi-site churches” can make this transition without that kind of absolute claim seems unlikely.<sup>7</sup>

According to Scott McConnell book, *Multi-Site Churches: Guidance for the Movement's Next Generation*, there are several principles that determine if your church should become a multisite congregation. First, McConnell says that a church should become multisite if its focus is on the Great Commission. It is one thing for churches and individual Christians to want new people to come to faith in Jesus Christ. It is quite another thing for an individual and even a church to take ownership of this responsibility. Taking responsibility is grounded in scripture. Jesus told His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mk 16:15). According to McConnell, it would be illogical to assume that Christ intended this command only for that first generation of followers. In the same way, it would be illogical for any believer to assume that this responsibility is reserved for someone else. Joining with other believers is not an option; it is the heart cry of our Savior. The focus of the church should be nothing less than sharing the message in both word and actions that God loves the world so much that He sent Jesus Christ to die for us.<sup>8</sup>

According to Church Carter, “There has got to be something driving the thing. Among the churches, I know where it is successful, it is because the Great Commission is

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Leeman, “Twenty-Two Problems With Multisite Churches,” *9 Marks*, accessed June 14, 2015, <http://9marks.org/article/twenty-two-problems-with-multi-site-churches/>.

<sup>8</sup> Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches: Guidance for the Movement's Next Generation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2009), 6.

driving it.” Your motivation impacts how you measure success, and there is not guarantee of success when a site is added. Every church that is focused on the Great Commission is not called to be a multisite church, but every multisite church should be driven by an evangelistic passion.<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, you should become multisite when you have a culture of multiplication. Jesus shared the principle in the parable of the sower (Mt. 13:1-9; 18-23) in which the one who planted reaped thirty, sixty, or one hundred times what had been sown. Most leaders agree with the principle, few members enjoy it, and fewer churches have engrained multiplication into their culture, resisting the dividing rather than celebrating the addition.<sup>10</sup>

Thirdly, you should become multi-site when you are willing to remove logistical barriers to reach more people. When the growth of the congregation becomes stagnant, multisite was a way to continue growth. At a multi-site location, the venue for serving God should change from the familiar to experimenting with a less formal worship service that includes coffee and refreshments in the back and allowing members to stand whenever they needed to instead of on cue from the worship leader. Additional services and opportunities to serve were eventually added to reach more people allowing new and potential members to have their needs met. If the barrier was a financial one, alternative and often temporary buildings and facilities were used; when the funds began to grow, plans are made for more permanent facilities.

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<sup>9</sup> Stetzer, “Starting, Staffing, and Supporting,” 7.

<sup>10</sup> Stetzer, “Starting, Staffing, and Supporting,” 8.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PROJECT ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this project was to create a biblical model for multi-site ministries and churches in the African-American community, specifically in the context of St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church (SPC) in Miami, Florida. This study was intended to show the developmental process for implementing one church with multiple locations, specifically geared to churches located in the inner city. The goal was to develop a second location that meets the needs of a neighboring community, as well as contribute to the growth of the overall congregation through multi-site ministry to a congregation that has been affected by the decline of the inner city population. The result of this project will be to fully develop a functioning model as a second location at SPC. It will also provide an outline and process for other churches to follow as a model for growth through the multi-site church development process.

In the African American church there is a lack of awareness, as well as a lack of successful paradigms that can be utilize to increase growth through multi-site church development. Though this is true in many other cultures, it appears the African American church has either not trusted or utilized the multi-site model to create growth for churches that are in decline. As a result, many of our churches appear to have no outlet or opportunity to expand, or at a minimum have consistent growth. Because of the migration

from the inner city to the suburbs, churches within the inner city have either declined or died. The church must develop a model that can fully function under the administration of one senior pastor, but still worship in different locations. When this can be done, a church can then have continuous and sustainable growth, because it will begin to meet the needs of the people in the community in which it serves. As a result, churches that once had declining memberships can experience new growth as they serve communities that are growing or where growth is expected.

Membership at SPC along with many other churches located in the inner city has been on the decline for years due to parishioners that have relocated from close proximity of the church into new geographic areas. Many of these families relocated because of a lack of inner city jobs because jobs in the inner city were low paying making it difficult to support their families. Combine economic struggles with the increase of crime, decreased property values, and more diverse neighborhoods, residence relocated to communities that they perceived would be more congruent with their lifestyle. The erosion of the community surrounding St. Paul contributed to members moving further and further away from the main church site. The distance members traveled to church created a disconnect limiting the number of times they would make the trip to worship or participate in various church activities and ministries.

The crux of the problem appears to be people wanting to worship around or in proximity to the communities in which they live. This project was an attempt to create a viable worship service in a community that desires to worship within a geographical area near their home. The struggle within the church is multifaceted. It must identify an existing problem, determine a solution to the problem, and garner support to do

something to resolve the problem. Because many inner city churches have lay leadership that appears to be aging, the energy and wherewithal to make necessary changes is often lacking. Thus, the ability to create a multi-site church is often limited due to the people and personnel that are in place. In order to overcome this problem, there must be overwhelming support to do multi-site ministry or else it will fail. Prayer along with works will move a church seeking change to create opportunities that will drive growth.

This project was based on the hypothesis that if SPC could create another worship service in another location called a multi site, it could not only reach members who live farther away from the church, but also create new growth patterns for the St. Paul church community at large. With the establishment of a multi-site location, St. Paul could minister to the needs of members both near and far and also serve potential new members who simply want to worship closer to their home. By creating such a dynamic model, SPC would help birth a new paradigm for church growth particularly. This project will serve as a model for one church in two locations. The context of this model is rooted in Methodist idealism, which simply stated means that in order to grow, there must be location after location after location to create consistent church growth.

In order for this project be successful, it must encompass a defined spiritual and financial outline for the church to stay focused on its mission of saving the lost. The project was designed to be comprehensive and engage the entire St. Paul community. This project utilized the entire church and was led and facilitated buy the senior pastor and associates of the St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church in Miami, Florida.



## **Methodology**

A qualitative research method was used to accomplish this project. The questions in this project were design to show the recipients and congregational interest in expanding to a multi site ministry model. This would give a baseline for understanding interest, as well as support for a second location. The methods used to gather data were: pre and post surveys, workshops, sermons, and Bible studies. The workshops were conducted in order to create awareness about new opportunities related to church growth and expansion through developing a multi-site church. The entire congregation was invited and had opportunities to ask questions and participate in the workshop. The sermon series and Bible study allowed the congregation to hear biblically the concept about church growth and development. By utilizing scriptures from the Old and New Testament, awareness was created to help put in context the feasibility for a second location. The pre and post surveys were dispense to understand the congregation's support level towards a multi-site church based on the demographics of our current membership. By utilizing this method, we were able to have a detailed picture of membership location, membership support, biblical responsibility and the importance of growth in order to survive.

## **Proposed Project Calendar**

<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Activity</b>
August 2013	Secure Location
August 2013	Context Associates Develops Survey
August 2013	Leadership Workshop on Multi-Site Church
August 2013	Pre Study Survey Given
August 2013	Identify Launch Team
September 2013	First Launch Team Meeting

September 2013	Sermons 1 & 2
September 2013	Bible Studies 1 & 2
September 2013	Prayer Emails Initiated (Weekly) (Intercessory Prayer Team)
September 2013	Membership Challenge – New Members Drive
September 2013	Identify and Hire Musicians (and Worship Leader)
September 2013	Organize and Acquire all Logistical Items and Services
October 2013	Post Study Survey Given
October 2013	Inaugural Service Evaluation of Survey Data

### **Implementation**

The significance of this section is to give an analysis of the overall project from conception to completion and to analyze the data that was gathered during the project that was done and completed at St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal church.

The decline of membership within St. Paul due to a shifting demographic moved this project to the forefront of St. Paul's priorities. Understanding the significance of developing this project was of utmost importance for securing the future of St. Paul. The reasoning behind this project is if the church can establish a second worship site in a growing demographic, then the second site will support growth to the entire St. Paul church. If this project is successful at St. Paul, it could be modeled by inner city African American churches throughout our nation.

In the developmental stages of the project, members of the congregation were asked to participate in a meeting to discuss the dynamics of the project. The group consisted of diverse individuals: seniors, young adults, adults, persons from leadership, and persons from general the membership. This core group labeled as context associates were

committed to seeing the project through from beginning to end and assisting in the development of the pre-and post-surveys.

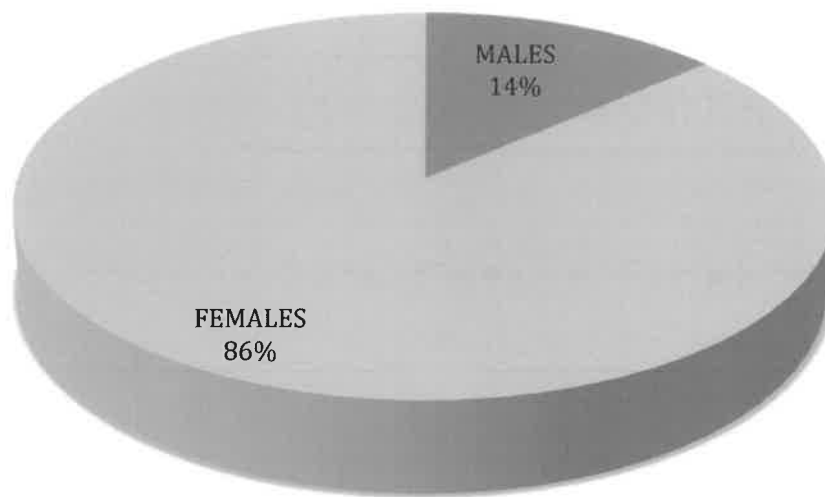
The entire congregation was notified of the project; however many of the conversations pertaining to a second location for many became sometimes toxic and questionable. Because of this, the senior pastor scheduled workshops and educational meetings. This information was also placed in the worship bulletins for the entire membership to be able to attend. The workshop on multi-site church development was scheduled, and the entire congregation was invited to attend, in order to have more details and receive more information.

Persons that participated in the initial meeting were asked to participate as context associates. This group, known as the leadership team completed consent applications and received information about the possible second location. The application explained the reason for context associates, the research involved, the requirements necessary, and the expected outcomes from the team.

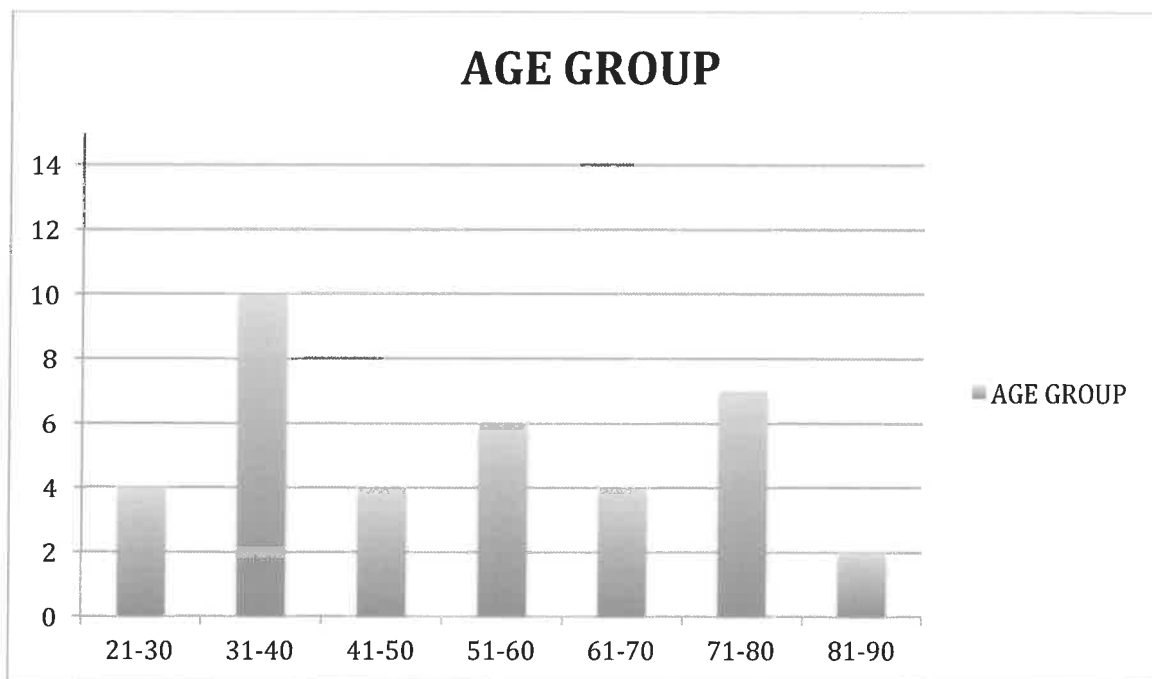
The pre-survey form was explained to the context associates in relation to garnering support for the multi-site location. Upon the arrival of the general membership to the workshop, packets were disbursed that had related information to the second location for St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church to begin a multi site. Within the packet was the survey asking questions related to membership support at various levels. The same survey was given at the conclusion of the workshop as a post survey. This was done to show the relative change of acceptance from the participants. The results of the pre-survey are listed below:

**Pre-Survey**

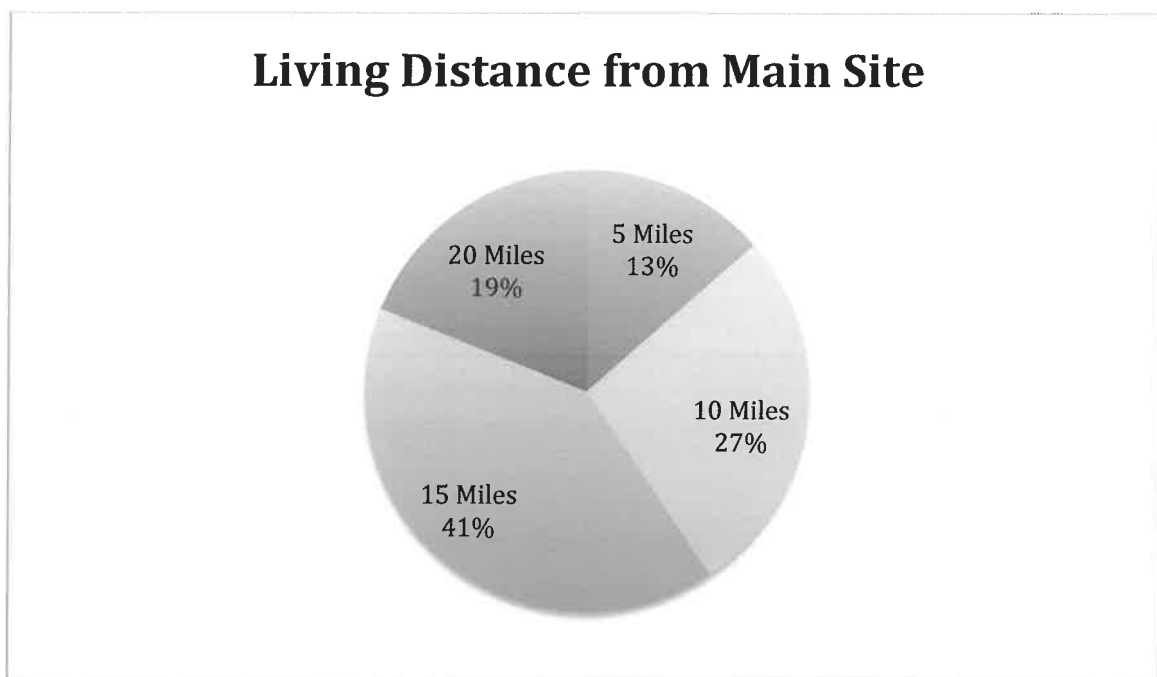
Members who Attended

**Attended**

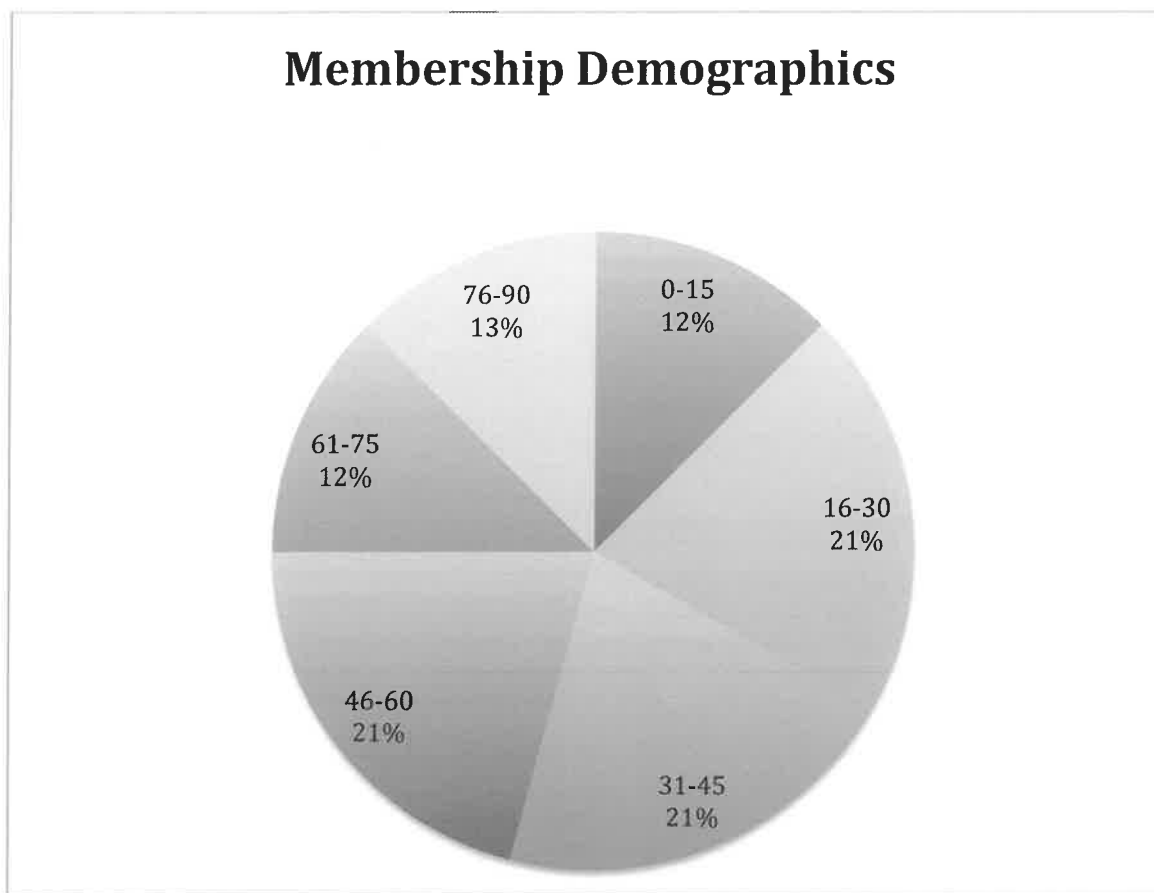
Age Groups Participation



Living Distance In Miles From Main Site



## Membership Demographics



The purpose of the previous charts is to give us an understanding of the overall matrix of the congregation at St. Paul. The membership attendance chart is in reference to the percentage of person who attended the workshop and completed the survey, as it relates to gender and age. The workshop pre-survey helped to determine membership demographics. From the survey, we were able to measure the distance congregants live from the main site. Distance from the main site helped us determine the need for another location. The final chart that is listed above gives the breakdown of the entire membership via percentage that make up that particular age bracket. This data allowed us to determine the age breakdown at St. Paul. It was discovered that persons over sixty had

no interest in attending another site even when the location was closer to where they currently lived.

### **Pre-Questionnaire/Survey**

1. Name
2. Address
3. City
4. State
5. Zip Code
6. Phone
7. Email
8. Are You Interested in learning more about St Paul , Miramar  
5.41% responded yes
9. Are you interested in learning more and praying?  
45.9% stated yes
10. Are you interested in being part of the core, learning and praying?  
22% stated yes
11. Are you interested in being a part of core and prayer?  
11% stated yes
12. Are you interested in prayer only?  
22% stated yes

13. Are you interested in a second location?

56% stated yes

14. Are you interested in being part of the core group?

35% stated yes

15. Do you think St. Paul needs another worship site?

59% stated yes

27% stated needing more information

14% stated no

### **Sermons**

Following the completion of the pre-survey, the senior pastor preached a two part sermon series over a two-week period. Following worship, the media ministry provided the link to the Context Analysis Team of the recorded sermon, which was given to every member of the congregation to watch at home, if they missed the sermon. This was done to create reference material for persons to go back and review at any time. The purpose of the sermon series was to explore effective ministry as a topic that has evaded evaluation in the church for years due to many variables that persons can look at to determine what is considered effective. For some, effectiveness is the number of members seen every Sunday in worship. For others, effectiveness maybe how much money the church raises every week. While others may view effectiveness by how many lives were saved or given to the Lord on that particular Sunday. The result is that many people view many different items as effective in the life of the church. What if being effective has nothing to do with any of the previous items and has everything to do with the mission of the church? If



biblically the church is designed to fulfill the mission of Christ, then the responsibility of the church is to go therefore making disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19). This New Testament reference can be seen clearly in this Old Testament text.

If accomplishing the mission of the church is what makes it effective and not numbers, money or lives saved, then having one church that can serve in multiple locations is not foreign to the Word of God. The ability to accomplish the mission can be done in many instances more effectively when it can be reproduced and offered in a community of need. Multiple locations can then assist the church in accomplishing its mission by being able to serve segments of a population or community and stay connected to the ministry or church's main site or central headquarters.

The first sermon was entitled, "A Church on the Move." It was preached to show that the church always ministered in motion. The ultimate goal of the church is not to serve people in one location, but where the people lived. The scripture utilized was Deuteronomy 18:1-8. In this Old Testament scripture, the story of the care, ministry, and role of the Levite is outlined in a clear narrative. The scripture gives us clarity as to the ability of the Levite to serve in a location other than Israel. Though the text is not clear as to all the duties of the Levites and priests, it is clear as it relates to the scope of their ministry. Deuteronomy 18:1-8 offers us an opportunity to see the Levites provide ministry in multiple locations, while at the same time being responsible in maintaining God's mandate as it relates to being provided for. This passage of scripture becomes fundamental in the understanding of churches establishing multiple ministries in various locations, especially when it is under the direction of a church that can be considered the headquarters or main site. Deuteronomy can be seen as one of the first initiatives

established biblically that show the Levites, priests or clerics moving from location to location under the divine inspiration of God with out recompense.

Deuteronomy 18:6 establish the fact that the Levites did not have any restraints related to service based upon place, region, or locale. There were limited numbers of Levites who were utilized for the service of the Lord in the actual sanctuary; the rest lived in their towns throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> The scripture shows us that the Levites could move around as they saw fit. Moses reminds the people that if a Levite comes out of any town in Israel where he previously lived that he must be cared for. Understanding that Levites did not have a particular piece of parcel or land, however, they sojourned in various areas in order to do the work of the Lord.

Moses through his conversation highlights the importance of the Levites in doing the work of the Lord. And emphasis on where he lived or where he sojourned is imperative for us to understand. The Levites had a stationary place to operate as a priest, but under the direction of God; they also had the ability as needed to move to administer in another place that the Lord chose. The text is clear because it provides the under girding truth that ministry is not limited to one place. As God sees fit, he can move the Levite from one area to another area to provide ministry under His direction.

The second sermon was titled, “When the Church Goes Mobile.” The main passage of scripture that was utilized came from Acts 8:1-8. It was used to discuss one of the underlying factors that contribute to church growth, understanding the mission of those who follow Christ. This mission should be at the forefront of every church, however, it is often overlooked or negated. When the body of Christ begins to understand

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<sup>1</sup> H. D. M Spence-Jones, *Deuteronomy* (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 302.

the mission of the church is to reach souls, save the lost, and touch lives, it will no longer focus on buildings and facilities and be limited because of location and structure.

The challenge of the church is to redirect our focus to the original purpose of the church, while at the same time see avenues and outlets that will enable the church to constantly fulfill its purpose and mission. The challenge, of course, is often leadership. No matter what your mission may be, leadership and authority are always primary issues. The main figure of the New Testament gospels is Jesus the Christ. He was the leader, guide, and compass for and to the people of God. Jesus provided the necessary leadership for the people of God and they followed him from place to place while he performed ministry. Not limited to any place, Jesus provided a paradigm for ministry to not be limited to one general location or setting.

If the role of the church is to fulfill the mission of Christ, then the main focus should not be how we fulfill it, but rather ensuring that it is accomplished. If the focus is on accomplishing the mission more than how to do the mission, there will be a constant freshness and uniqueness when it relates to how to do the mission of Christ. The mission of the church found in Matthew 8 should constantly guide the church in an effort to keep the body of Christ centered on its mission. If an organization is never reminded of its mission, then it will easily lose focus and become stagnant and stale as it relates to fulfilling its purpose.

The challenge to the body of Christ is to remain focused and not be hindered by the methods required to accomplish the mission. When there is constant focus on the mission, methods though varying, will not become the focus. A contemporary example of this could be, a family driving on vacation looks at the GPS and determines multiple

ways or methods to arrive at their planned destination. The family has options, as it relates to how they will get there, however, the mission is to get to the destination. The driver must determine what is the best route for the family to ensure their arrival. The focus cannot be on the route we take, but ensuring that the family arrives at the destination. The body of Christ cannot be hindered by how we accomplish the mission and never get the mission accomplished. The mission must remain the focus and the methods must always be secondary.

### **Bible Study**

Bible study was done in a two-week series entitled, “Go to Grow.” This was completed at our Wednesday evening weekly Bible study and addressed the opportunities that could be found in growth if the church decided to go and minister in new places. The motif of mission work was the foundation of the two Bible studies, in line with the Great Commission. The structure was in two parts entitled, opportunities and opposition.

#### *Opposition*

- What is opposition- Proverbs - 24:10
- How does opposition make you feel
- What to do with opposition - Hebrews 13:5
- How do you fight opposition - 1 Peter 5:
- Overcoming adversity - 1 Timothy 1:7
- How do you endure adversity - Isaiah 40:28-31

- Submitting and Resisting - James 4:7
- Let faith work for you - 2 Timothy 2:3; 1 John 5:4
- Get back to church - Hebrews 4:9
- Who will have to deal with diversity - Romans 8:28

### *Opportunities*

- What is opportunity - Genesis 1:14
- How do you recognize and discern opportunity - Ecclesiastes 3:1
- Opportunities to do good should be taken
  - Galatians 6:10
  - John 9:4
  - Colossians 4:5
  - 2 Timothy 4:2
- Examples of opportunities
  - Rahab and Spies - Joshua 2:8-14
  - Esther and Haman - Esther 4:14, 7:3-6
  - David and Saul - 1 Samuel 24
  - Priscilla and Aquila - Acts 18:24-26
- Common threads in opportunities
  - Foresight
  - Action
  - Discernment
  - Risk

- Dependence
  - Preparedness
  - Uniqueness
- What are the opportunities at St. Paul
  - Growth
  - Expansion
  - Witness
  - Multi-site second location

### **Post-Survey**

Following the sermon series and the Bible study series a post-survey was given to the participants. The purpose of the post-survey was to see if after the messages and Bible study series were given, if the participants saw church growth and expansion through a second location in a better light.

1. Name
2. Address
3. City
4. State
5. Zip Code
6. Phone
7. Email
8. Are You Interested in learning more about St Paul, Miramar

55.1% responded yes

9. Are you interested in learning more and praying?

64.9% stated yes

10. Are you interested in being part of the core group, learning and praying?

61% stated yes

11. Are you interested in being a part of core and prayer?

44% stated yes

12. Are you interested in prayer only?

41% stated yes

13. Are you interested in a second location?

78% stated yes

14. Are you interested in being part of the core group?

52% stated yes

15. Do you think St. Paul needs another worship site?

73% stated yes

18% stated needing more information

9% stated no

### **Summary Of Learning**

At the conclusion of the workshops, sermon series and Bible studies, the context associates came together to gather the information and analyze the data from the surveys.

The data analysis brought forth five main issues, namely:

1. How much support is necessary
2. When is the right time
3. With support how do we move forward
4. What is limiting our support
5. What are the next steps

With the following issues brought forward, the context associates along with the leadership and staff of St. Paul Church developed the following strategic plan outline.

This outline could be used to assist the learning process and move the project forward towards completion:

#### Introduction

- a. St. Paul AME Church-Miami is a growing church with an average weekly attendance of over 350. Our leadership values the establishment of a new church location as an effective means for reaching the unsaved with the Good News of Jesus.
- b. Miramar, Florida is one of the fastest growing African American communities in Broward County. This explosive growth yields a fertile field for church planting. St. Paul currently has numerous families attending from the North Miami-Dade and South Broward Counties.
- c. God has blessed the St. Paul's leadership with financial support, staff support, heart, and vision for starting a second location in Miramar, Florida. In response to God's calling, the leadership of St. Paul Church is committed to launching the Miramar Campus.

#### Purpose

- a. To identify a clear vision for startup of the Miramar Campus.
- b. To identify detailed actions required to achieve the vision and to yield a high impact, high quality startup at minimum cost. The plan is intended to be flexible and adaptable as God leads us, and is not intended to be a fixed, unchanging document.
- c. To provide a clear and concise written plan that will enable participants in the project to understand their roles and responsibilities in support of the vision.



The plan is intended to be a guide that empowers, energizes, and aligns participants in joyful works.

- d. To provide a clear set of expectations to which the St. Paul leadership team, ministerial team and other partners can assess and monitor the progress and effectiveness of the project. The plan identifies specific measurable expectations.

### Governing Principles and Considerations

Throughout the Miramar Campus start up, the following principles and considerations guide and influence our planning and decision-making:

- a. God's Provision: We trust and believe that God will do immeasurably more in Miramar than we could ever ask or imagine. Our commitment is to put our trust and faith in God.
- b. Our Values: Our values define what is important to us. Our values shape who we are, what we do, and how we act. In all things, we will strive to model and live our values.
- c. Prayer: We recognize the power and absolute necessity of seeking God's direction at every stage of this process. Proverbs 16:9 says, "In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps." We will make prayer a priority.
- d. Relationships: Establishing, building and nurturing relationships with God, with one another, and with the Community will take priority in all we do. We are committed to love each other (1 Cor 13), not a product or a process.
- e. Excellence: We will strive for excellence in all that we do. Excellence honors God. We desire to eliminate barriers between Christ and the unsaved. Our commitment to and demonstration of excellence will draw unsaved people to be more receptive to hearing and considering the good news of Jesus Christ.
- f. Planning: Planning is a means to an end, not the end. We will always seek first to be led by God without being constrained by our plans. We will use planning as a tool to help us join God in what He is doing and to accomplish what He is calling us to do. Planning will help us coordinate our limited resources to move us from where we are to where God wants us to be. Our plans serve as a guide to help focus our efforts and our plans will be updated to reflect where God is leading us.

## Executive Summary

- a. The Miramar Campus will target young professionals (married and single) with children. The Miramar Campus will be launched with an expected attendance of at least 300 people. Based on the current and expected growth patterns of our target population, the Church location is being targeted within a 15-mile radius of Interstate 75, the Florida Turnpike and the Palmetto Expressway. The Church will meet in the New Renaissance Middle School.
- b. At launch, a core group of at least twenty-five people will be actively participating in the start up. The development and growth of this core group is considered vital to a successful launch. From this group, future leaders will be developed, ministry teams will be filled, and a strong and active ministry will emerge. Considerable effort will be applied prior to launch in training, nurturing and growing this group.
- c. A core leadership team (Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor) will participate in planning and implementation of the Miramar Campus launch. The Minister of Communication, Minister of Evangelism and Outreach and the Director of the Greeter's Ministry will ensure seamless implementation of the current marketing and outreach plans. Faith Jones will provide general administrative support.
- d. The new Campus is expected to be fully self-supporting within the first year of the launch.
- e. A goal of the launch plan is to hold attendance at or above the initial attendance level by leveraging strengths, resources, and existing practices of St. Paul AME Church. People will be drawn to the Miramar Campus through one-on-one relationships with members of the core group, through targeted community outreach events and through a targeted marketing strategy. First time visitors will be drawn back and will make the Miramar Campus their Church home through practical and relevant preaching, culturally relevant worship (including music, dramas and video), a safe seeker-sensitive environment, experiencing first-hand the warmth and love of God and excellence in everything we do.

## Roles and Responsibilities of Individuals, Support Teams, and Partners

The successful launch of the Miramar Campus requires that individuals and groups work together for the common good of the ministry. This section identifies these individuals and groups, including a brief description of their responsibilities.

a. Senior Pastor - Responsibilities include:

- Serves as Team Leader for the launch team.
- Entrepreneurial ownership (owner's perspective) of the Campus. This includes the following general aspects:
  - Spiritual pulse of campus
  - Quality pulse of campus
  - Relational pulse of campus
  - Needs pulse of campus
- Visitor Follow-up: Calling visitors. (Glenda Steward, Lead Greeters Ministry)
- Up front connecting the dots as the Face on Sunday morning. Adequately preparing before Sunday morning.

b. Executive Pastor – Responsibilities include:

- Oversee the operations of the ministry, including management of ministerial staff. These responsibilities include long and short-term planning, and quality, efficiency and effectiveness of operations.
- Maintaining a list of core leaders and making regular contact with them (e.g. emails, one-on-one meetings, etc.).
- Staff Coordination: Coordinating staff involvement for campus-wide events. Keeping staff informed about campus issues/events.

c. Minister of Evangelism and Outreach – Responsibilities include:

- Oversee the implementation of the outreach and marketing plans. This includes developing and overseeing an outreach team consisting of people from the launch team.

d. Director of Greeter's Ministry – Responsibilities include:

- Visitor Follow-up: Assisting the Senior Pastor with calling visitors

e. Minister of Communications and Director of Greeter's Ministry– Responsibilities include:

- Marketing/communications about campus-wide events. Feeling personally responsible for making sure everything possible is being done to inform and get people to take next steps (i.e. attending, signing-up, etc.).
- f. General Administrative and Logistics Support (Faith Jones) – Responsibilities include:
- Provide general administrative support for both locations.
- g. Ministerial Staff – Responsibilities include:
- Communicate the vision and assist in equipping others to carry out the required work of the ministry. Vital to our success is the ability to become equippers versus doers.
- h. Intercessory Prayer Team – Responsibilities include:
- Build an intercessory prayer team and communicate prayer needs on a regular basis to them.
- i. Miramar Campus Leadership Team - Responsibilities include:
- The Leadership Team (as defined by the Senior Pastor) Miramar Campus will oversee and have responsibility for the Miramar campus according to the relative doctrines.

### Approach

This section provides an overview of the approach taken in developing this Miramar Campus Launch Plan. This section is included for information to explain the sequence of steps taken in developing this launch plan.

- a. Seeking to Understand What God is Up To: We value church growth. Miramar is one of the fastest growing African American communities in Broward County, which results in a fertile field for new churches. God has been blessing us with provision to move forward. We continue to prayerfully consider where God is leading us in this project.
- b. Defining a Target Demographic and Potential Locations: An important step in laying the plans for Miramar is to understand the demographics of the population. Specifically, what does the average family in Miramar look like, including their age, number of children, where they live, what they do, their education, how much they earn, what they like to do, what their needs are, etc. See section VIII for a more detailed explanation of our target demographics.

- c. Opening Day (What Will We Look Like at Launch?): With the understanding that God's provision in the Miramar project is large and that He is entrusting us with much, we start our planning by defining a picture of what we sense God calling us to look like at launch (first worship service). By first painting a picture of what we are to become, our planning becomes the road map for getting there. See section IX below for a more detailed description of what we will look like in Miramar on opening day.
- d. Defining Areas Critical to Our Success: After defining what we will look like at launch, we identify the elements/factors that are critical to achieving this goal. For this location, these elements include a prayer team, core group development, vision casting and communications, marketing, staffing, facilities, equipment, finance, business and community partnering, ministry teams (e.g. setup/breakdown, worship, hospitality) and post-launch assimilation. Actions are identified for each of these areas.
- e. Developing an Integrated Timeline of Activities: After developing written strategies for each of the areas that are critical to achieving our desired goals at launch, a single integrated planning timeline is developed. This timeline is a compilation of the actions identified above. The timeline is essentially a checklist of what needs to be done, when it is to be done, and who will do it. See section XI for a summary of key items from the timeline.

### The Application to St. Paul Church

What does it mean to be one church with multiple sites (or campuses)? In a nutshell, we will function like one church because our purpose, our values and beliefs (which largely shape our culture), and our strategy/approach will be the same between the sites. This section provides an overview of how the multi-site model will apply at St. Paul Church.

- a. So how do we align the Church, with multiple sites, to achieve our desired result? We start by sharing a common purpose to which we are trying to align. Simply stated, St. Paul Church exists to lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Both sites of St. Paul Church will share this common purpose.
- b. Aiming at a common purpose, a primary role of leadership is to communicate vision effectively and to equip others to effectively accomplish God's work. Leadership is a key element of aligning the people and ministries of St. Paul on our common purpose. Our Senior Pastor (Robert Jackson, III) will have overall leadership responsibility over both sites. Our staff will be shared between sites and will have leadership responsibilities over everything within their assigned areas of responsibility.
- c. Organizational culture is a powerful tool for aligning people and ministries. Like guardrails along a road, culture helps to keep us from running off the

road. Our culture is shaped primarily by our values, our beliefs, our expectations of people (norms), and how we empower our leaders (tether). We will function as multiple sites with one culture.

- d. Specifically, both sites of St. Paul Church will share common values, beliefs, expectations of people (norms), and empowerment of leaders (tether). For example, we value:
  - Commitment
  - Excellence
  - Faithfulness
  - Family
  - God's Gift to Us
  - Integrity
  - Love
  - Praise
  - Prayer
  - Servant Leader

Both sites will share these values.

Armed with common purpose, leadership, and culture, our approach to managing our resources will be common. Organizational elements that will be managed consistently between sites include communications (internal and external), long-range planning, processes/practices, programs, organizational structure, finances, facilities, and analysis/assessment. Just as culture represents the guard rail that keeps us from running off the road, our approach to managing resources is analogous to the lines on the road that help keep us moving in the right direction on the road. In addition to further helping to align our ministries and our people in achieving our common purpose, a common

approach to managing resources should improve the quality and efficiency of our operations.

As stated elsewhere in this launch plan, the multi-site model can be a higher quality, higher impact launch at a lower cost. We can reach more people and improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of all we do. The goal is to ensure that ministry is not limited to the borders of what staff can do on their own. Three potential challenges exist: sharing of staff (healthy volunteer lead teams will be essential), improving the quality of current processes while expanding ministry, and maintaining momentum (starting something new can tend to slow down that which already exists).

### **Recommendations and Conclusions**

The recommended model and steps for implementation of St. Paul's second site is necessary in order for the project to move forward, are as follows:

1. *Evaluate the strategic plan.* The first step in the implementation process is to step back and make sure that you know what the strategic plan is. Review it carefully, and highlight any elements of the plan that might be especially challenging. Recognize any parts of the plan that might be unrealistic or excessive in cost, either of time or money. Highlight these, and be sure to keep them in mind as you begin implementing the strategic plan. Keep back-up ideas in mind in case the original plan fails.
2. *Create a vision for implementing the strategic plan.* This vision might be a series of goals to be reached, step by step, or an outline of items that need to be completed. Be sure to let everyone know what the end result should be and why it is important. Establish a clear image of what the strategic plan is intended to accomplish.
3. *Select your Strategic Implementation Team.* Make sure you have a team that "has your back," so to speak, and understands the purpose of the plan and the steps involved in implementing it. Establish a team leader, if other than yourself, who can encourage the team and field questions or address problems as they arise.

4. *Schedule meetings to discuss progress reports.* Present the list of goals and/or objectives, and inform SIT of what has been accomplished. Whether the implementation is on schedule, ahead of schedule, or behind schedule, assess the current schedule regularly to discuss any changes that need to be made. Establish a rewards system that recognizes success throughout the process of implementation.
5. *Involve the Church Leadership and congregation where appropriate.* Keep the congregation informed on what is happening, and provide progress reports on the implementation of the plan. Letting the church body about the progress of implementation makes them a part of the process.

In conclusion, the leadership team is confident that the project model will make a difference in the growth and development of St. Paul Church, as well as, many other congregations across the nation. We pray that churches and ministries in urban locations and communities that have had demographic shifts will seek to adopt a culture of change and see the multi-site church as an opportunity to continue to grow.



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